



Home Office

Country Information and Guidance

Iraq: Security situation in Baghdad, the south and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)

Version 2.0

August 2016

Preface

This document provides country of origin information (COI) and guidance to Home Office decision makers on handling particular types of protection and human rights claims. This includes whether claims are likely to justify the granting of asylum, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave and whether – in the event of a claim being refused – it is likely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under s94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers must consider claims on an individual basis, taking into account the case specific facts and all relevant evidence, including: the guidance contained with this document; the available COI; any applicable caselaw; and the Home Office casework guidance in relation to relevant policies.

Country Information

The COI within this document has been compiled from a wide range of external information sources (usually) published in English. Consideration has been given to the relevance, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, currency, transparency and traceability of the information and wherever possible attempts have been made to corroborate the information used across independent sources, to ensure accuracy. All sources cited have been referenced in footnotes. It has been researched and presented with reference to the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the [European Asylum Support Office’s research guidelines, Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), dated July 2012.

Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve the guidance and information we provide. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this document, 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 make recommendations to him about the content of the Home Office’s COI material. 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. IAGCI may be contacted at:

Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration,
5th Floor, Globe House, 89 Eccleston Square, London, SW1V 1PN.

Email: chiefinspectorukba@icinspector.gsi.gov.uk

Information about the IAGCI’s work and a list of the COI documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector’s website at <http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/country-information-reviews/>

Contents

Guidance	4
1. Introduction.....	4
1.1 Basis of Claim	4
1.2 Other Points to Note.....	4
2. Consideration of Issues	4
2.1 Credibility.....	4
2.2 Exclusion.....	4
2.3 Assessment of risk	5
i. Refugee Convention.....	5
ii. Humanitarian situation.....	5
iii. Security situation	5
2.4 Internal relocation.....	6
2.5 Certification	6
3. Policy summary	6
Country Information	7
4. Actors of violence	7
5. Control of territory	8
5.1 Control of Iraq.....	8
5.2 The ‘Baghdad Belts’	10
6. Levels of violence	14
6.1 Security incidents (in Baghdad).....	14
6.2 Fatalities.....	14
6.3 Injuries (in Baghdad)	16
6.4 Nature of violence (in Baghdad)	17
7. Displacement.....	18
7.1 Overview	18
7.2 Returns.....	21
8. Human rights violations against civilians	22
8.1 Baghdad.....	22
8.2 The south	23
8.3 The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)	26
Annexes	28
Version Control and Contacts	35

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of Claim

- 1.1.1 That the security situation in Baghdad, the south of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) presents a real risk which threatens life or person such that removal would be in breach of Article 15(c) of European Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 ('the Qualification Directive').

[Back to Contents](#)

1.2 Other Points to Note

- 1.2.1 For the purposes of this guidance Baghdad refers to the governorate (including Baghdad City), the south refers to the governorates of Babil, Basra, Kerbala, Missan, Muthanna, Najaf, Qaddisiyah, Thi-Qar and Wissan, and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) refers to the governorates of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymnyah.
- 1.2.2 For consideration of the security situation in the 'contested' governorates (Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk (aka Tameen), Ninewah and Salah al-Din), see [Iraq: Country Information and Guidance: Security situation in the 'contested' areas](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

2. Consideration of Issues

2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For guidance on assessing credibility, see the [Asylum 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 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

[Back to Contents](#)

2.2 Exclusion

- 2.2.1 Various groups have been responsible for serious human rights abuses (see [Actors of violence](#)). If it is accepted that the person has been involved with such a group then decision makers must consider whether one of the Exclusion clauses is applicable.
- 2.2.2 For guidance on the exclusion clauses, discretionary leave and restricted leave, see the [Asylum Instruction on Exclusion: Article 1F of the Refugee Convention](#), the [Asylum Instruction on Discretionary Leave](#) and the [Asylum Instruction on Restricted Leave](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

2.3 Assessment of risk

i. Refugee Convention

- 2.3.1 Decision makers should first consider if the person faces persecution for a Refugee Convention reason noting that a state of civil instability and/or where law and order has broken down does not of itself give rise to a well-founded fear of persecution for a Convention reason.
- 2.3.2 Where the person qualifies under the Refugee Convention, decision makers do not need to go on to make an assessment of the need for protection firstly under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and if that is unsuccessful, under Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive.

ii. Humanitarian situation

- 2.3.3 It is only if the person does **not** qualify under the Refugee Convention that decision makers need to make an assessment of the need for protection firstly under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and, if that is unsuccessful, under Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive. For guidance on Article 3 claims based on humanitarian conditions in Iraq, see [Iraq: Country Information and Guidance – humanitarian situation](#)

iii. Security situation

- 2.3.4 Unlike Article 3 ECHR, Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive applies only to civilians, who must be genuine non-combatants and not those who are party to the conflict. Civilian status could extend to former combatants who have genuinely and permanently renounced armed activity.
- 2.3.5 In the Country Guidance (CG) case of [AA \(Article 15\(c\)\) \(Rev 1\) Iraq CG \[2015\] UKUT 544 \(IAC\) \(30 September 2015\)](#), the Upper Tribunal (UT) found that the degree of armed conflict in most of Baghdad governorate (including Baghdad City), the southern governorates and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) **does not** engage Article 15(c) of the QD (paragraph 204, A1).
- 2.3.6 The UT, however, also found that the degree of armed conflict in certain parts of the ‘Baghdad Belts’ (the urban environs around Baghdad City) **does** give rise to a generalised Article 15(c) risk. The parts of the Baghdad Belts concerned are those forming the border between the Baghdad Governorate and the contested areas [i.e. with the governorates of Anbar, Salah Al-Din and Diyala]’ (paragraph 204, sub-paragraph 2).
- 2.3.7 In areas where there is no general Article 15(c) risk, decision makers must consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the person’s individual circumstances which might nevertheless place them at risk.
- 2.3.8 For guidance on assessing risk, see [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) and for guidance on Article 15(c), including consideration of enhanced risk factors, see the [Asylum Instruction on Humanitarian Protection](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

2.4 Internal relocation

- 2.4.1 In general, a person can relocate to areas which do not meet the threshold of Article 15(c). See [Iraq: Internal relocation \(including documentation and feasibility of return\)](#) for further information and guidance on internal relocation.
- 2.4.2 For guidance on internal relocation, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

2.5 Certification

- 2.5.1 Where a claim falls to be refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 2.5.2 For guidance on certification, see the [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

3. Policy summary

- 3.1.1 In the CG case of AA, the courts found that, in most of Baghdad governorate (including Baghdad City), the southern governorates and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), indiscriminate violence is not at such a level that substantial grounds exist for believing that a person, solely by being present there for any length of time, faced a real risk of harm which threatened their life or person.
- 3.1.2 However, AA found that the security situation in the parts of the ‘Baghdad Belts’ (the areas surrounding Baghdad City), which border Anbar, Salah Al-Din and Diyala governorates is at such a level that substantial ground exist for believing that a person, solely by being present there for any length of time, faced a real risk of harm which threatened their life or person (thereby engaging Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive and entitling a person to a grant of Humanitarian Protection).
- 3.1.3 In areas where there is no general Article 15(c) risk, decision makers should consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the person’s individual circumstances which might nevertheless place them at enhanced risk.
- 3.1.4 In general, a person can relocate to the areas which do not meet the threshold of Article 15(c).
- 3.1.5 Where a claim falls to be refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

[Back to Contents](#)

Country Information

Updated: 15 August 2016

4. Actors of violence

- 4.1.1 Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, in a briefing dated 29 July 2016, commented on the Iraqi army:

'Since the initial offensive, Iraqi forces have largely been unable to regain and hold territory, with key strategic terrain such as Ramadi, Baiji, and Tikrit often being gained and lost through 2015. By the close of 2015, Iraqi forces had finally secured Tikrit, Baiji and Ramadi, heavily assisted by coalition aircraft, Iranian leadership and the substantial support in the form of Shia militias. The militias are officially recognised as an extension of the armed forces after a 2014 decree, but operate largely independently of centralised command. Although Islamic State continues to operate freely in pockets of western and north-central Iraq, but their freedom of movement has been constrained by Iraqi and Peshmerga successes in closing off access to Islamic State elements based in Syria.'¹

- 4.1.2 The source further noted, in respect of the Kurdish armed forces:

'The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is based in Erbil, and governs Erbil, Slemani, and Duhok. The principal armed groups in the KRG are under the control of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). While nominally part of the Iraqi Army in previous years, 2014 saw Kurdish forces deploy under the control of Erbil, with reports of Kurdish soldiers in Iraqi Army units deserting to join units under control of the KDP and PUK, both of which maintain their own military wings, loyal to their respective parties...'²

- 4.1.3 Daesh (Islamic State) are an Islamic jihadist insurgent group which emerged from al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). In December 2013 the group took control of Fallujah before capturing Mosul, Iraq's third-biggest city, in June 2014, advanced towards Baghdad and declared the creation of an Islamic Caliphate.³ For further background see the [BBC profile on Daesh](#).

- 4.1.4 Although Daesh remained the main insurgent group in Iraq, other Sunni anti-government groups included Jaysh Rijal-al Tariqah al-Naqshabandia (JRTN) and the closely-related General Military Council of Iraqi Revolutionaries and Iraq Ba'ath Party; the Fallujah Military Council; the Council of

¹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – Iraq – Armed Forces, 29 July 2016, subscription required, accessed 29 July 2016. Available on request.

² Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – Iraq – Armed Forces, 29 July 2016, subscription required, accessed 29 July 2016. Available on request.

³ BBC News, 'What is "Islamic State?"', 2 December 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-29052144>, accessed 3 March 2016

Revolutionaries Tribes of Anbar; the 1920 Brigades; the Islamic Army of Iraq; Jayish al-Mujahidin and Ansar al-Islam.⁴

- 4.1.5 There are also Shia militias operating in Iraq. In October 2014 the Council of Ministers approved a decree regularizing the Popular Mobilisation Units (PMUs) to fight against Daesh. A September 2015 Congressional Research Service report stated that current estimates of the total Shia militiamen in Iraq number about 100,000.⁵ The main armed Shia groups operating in Iraq were the Badr Brigades; the Mahdi Army; Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq and Kata'ib Hizbullah.⁶

[Back to Contents](#)

5. Control of territory

5.1 Control of Iraq

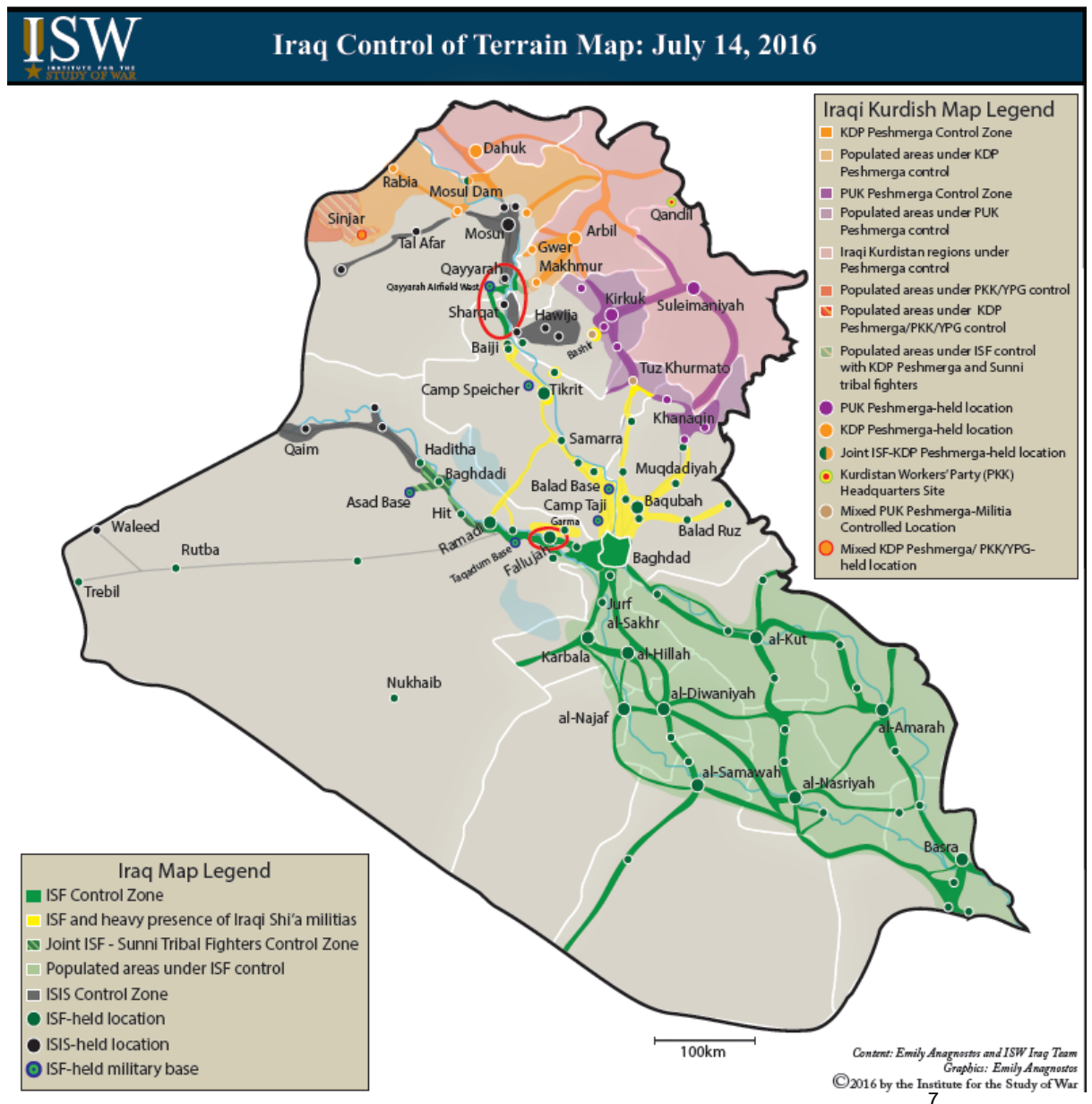
- 5.1.1 The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provided the following map showing the control of terrain in Iraq, dated July 2016.

⁴ Institute for the Study of War, 'Beyond The Islamic State: Iraq's Sunni Insurgency', October 2014, p.9, <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/beyond-islamic-state-iraqs-sunni-insurgency>, accessed 7 January 2016

⁵ Congressional Research Service, Iraq: Politics, Security, and US Policy, 16 September 2015, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21968.pdf>, accessed 6 January 2016

⁶ Amnesty International, 'Iraq: Absolute impunity: militia rule in Iraq', 14 October 2014, p.17, https://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/absolute_impunity_iraq_report.pdf, accessed 13 January 2016

Map showing control of terrain in Iraq, July 2016



5.1.2 These maps are regularly updated to reflect the changing situation. See the [The Institute for the Study of War \(ISW\)](http://www.instituteforthe studyofwar.org) for the latest map and summary of control of terrain, as well as previous maps and summaries.

5.1.3 To see how the conflict has evolved, see the [BBC's timeline of events](http://www.bbc.com/news/iraq-35284444).

5.1.4 The following sources are also useful:

- [ISW's 'ISIS Sanctuary Map'](http://www.instituteforthe studyofwar.org) to see Daesh's current control of terrain.

⁷ Institute for the Study of War (ISW), Iraq Control of Terrain, 14 July 2016, <http://www.understandingwar.org/project/control-terrain-iraq>, accessed 4 August 2016

- [ISW's Iraq Situation Reports](#)
- [Musings on Iraq \(Joel Wing blog\)](#)
- [The Long War Journal](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

5.2 The 'Baghdad Belts'

5.2.1 The Institute for the Study of War, in an undated briefing, explained:

'The Baghdad belts are residential, agricultural, and industrial areas that encircle the city, and networks of roadways, rivers, and other lines of communication that lie within a twenty or thirty mile radius of Baghdad and connect the capital to the rest of Iraq. Beginning in the north, the belts include the cities of Taji [Baghdad governorate⁸], clockwise to Tarmiyah [Baghdad governorate⁹], Baqubah [Diyala governorate¹⁰], Buhriz [Diyala governorate¹¹], Besmayah and Nahrwan [Baghdad governorate¹²], Salman Pak [Baghdad governorate¹³], Mahmudiyah [Baghdad governorate¹⁴], Sadr al-Yusufiyah [Baghdad governorate¹⁵], Fallujah [Anbar governorate¹⁶], and Karmah [Anbar governorate¹⁷]. This "clock" can be divided into quadrants: Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and Northwest.'¹⁸

⁸ OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Kadhimia District, 9 August 2014, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/Baghdad_Gov_Kadhimia_District.pdf, accessed 15 August 2016

⁹ OCHA, Baghdad governorate, Tarmia district, 9 August 2014, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/Baghdad_Gov_Tarmia_District.pdf, accessed 15 August 2016

¹⁰ OCHA, Baghdad governorate, 19 July 2014, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/M_A012%20Iraq%20Governorate%20map_Baghdad_0.pdf, accessed 15 August 2016

¹¹ OCHA, Baghdad governorate, 19 July 2014, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/M_A012%20Iraq%20Governorate%20map_Baghdad_0.pdf, accessed 15 August 2016

¹² OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Mada'in District, 9 August 2014, http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/Baghdad_Gov_Mada%27in_District_1.pdf, accessed 15 August 2016

¹³ OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Mada'in District, 9 August 2014, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/Baghdad_Gov_Mada%27in_District_1.pdf, accessed 15 August 2016

¹⁴ OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Mahmoudiya District, http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/Baghdad_Gov_Mahmoudiya_District_0.pdf, accessed 15 August 2016

¹⁵ OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Mahmoudiya District, http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/Baghdad_Gov_Mahmoudiya_District_0.pdf, accessed 15 August 2016

¹⁶ OCHA, Iraq – Anbar Governorate, Falluja District, 9 August 2014, http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/Anbar_Gov_Falluja_District.pdf, accessed 15 August 2016

¹⁷ OCHA, Iraq – Anbar Governorate, Falluja District, 9 August 2014, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/Anbar_Gov_Falluja_District.pdf, accessed 15 August 2016

¹⁸ Institute for the Study of War (ISW), 'Baghdad belts', undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/baghdad-belts>, accessed 15 August 2016

5.2.2 The same source provided the following geographical background for each of the four quadrants:

North-east belt

'The northeastern belt runs from the Tarmiyah area in the Tigris River Valley, east through Khalis and Baqubah and south to Nahrawan east of Baghdad. It controls the road networks that link Baghdad with the eastern shore of the Tigris River Valley, as well the Diyala River Valley and a key border crossing with Iran.¹⁹

South-east belt

'The southeastern belt wraps around the capital in an arc running from Nahrawan east of Baghdad, south through Jisr Diyala down to Salman Pak, and east through Arab Jabour and Hawr Rajab to the city of Mahmudiyah. Most of the area is rural farmland, crisscrossed by irrigation canals that limit mobility and facilitate the creation of insurgent refuges. The area sits astride several key lines of communication, including Highway Eight, running from Baghdad through Mahmudiyah to the south, and Highway Six, linking Baghdad with Salman Pak and al-Kut to the southeast.²⁰

South-west belt

'The southwestern belt runs from Fallujah down the Euphrates River corridor, through Sadr al-Yusufiyah, Yusufiyah, east to Mahmudiyah and south to Iskandariyah.²¹

North-west belt

'The northwestern Baghdad belt ... [stretches] from Karmah west of Baghdad to Tarmiyah in the north.'²²

5.2.3 According to the Long War Journal (LWJ), in 2006 a forerunner to Daesh, the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) devised a strategy to attack the Iraqi capital by taking over the belt regions that surrounding Baghdad. The plan was discovered after US forces found a map on the body of Abu Musab al Zarqawi, ISI's leader, who was killed in Baqubah (Diyala) in 2006.²³

¹⁹ Institute for the Study of War (ISW), 'Baghdad belts: Northeast', undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/northeast>, accessed 15 August

²⁰ Institute for the Study of War (ISW), 'Baghdad belts: Southeast', undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/southeast>, accessed 15 August 2016

²¹ Institute for the Study of War (ISW), 'Baghdad belts: Southwest', undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/southwest>, accessed 15 August 2016

²² Institute for the Study of War (ISW), 'Baghdad belts: Northwest', undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/northwest>, accessed 15 August 2016

²³ Long War Journal, Analysis: ISIS, allies reviving 'Baghdad belts' battle plan, 14 June 2014, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/06/analysis_isis_allies.php#ixzz3PHlpCSic, accessed 15 August 2016

- 5.2.4 A briefing published by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), undated, accessed 15 August 2016, explained how each of the four quadrants, which formed the Baghdad belts region, had historically been a known area of insurgent activity. Referring to the civil unrest between 2004 and 2006, the source noted that insurgents were able to use the terrain around Baghdad to ‘project forces and funnel supplies into the capital, and to freely move around the city into the provinces.’²⁴
- 5.2.5 The briefing paper cited Lt General Ray Odierno, commander of the then Multi-National Corps [MNF], who explained: “Attacks occurring in Baghdad often originate in these outerlying regions. Sectarian lines begin to blur in these belts, creating a flashpoint for extremists looking to assert their control over Baghdad. Al-Qaeda in Iraq and Shi’a extremists want to control these areas.” The article explained how the MNF counter-offensive, known as the ‘surge’, involved additional troop deployment to the Baghdad area to create a deep encirclement of Baghdad to prevent insurgents from moving around Iraq or from sector to sector. The article concluded: ‘By mid-2008, the offensives, which combined raids and strikes with the intensive projection of US and Iraqi forces into local communities, rendered al-Qaeda’s belt system inoperable even as pockets of local al-Qaeda and a few foreign fighters remained in those areas.’²⁵
- 5.2.6 The ISW reported that the north-eastern belt, because of its strategic location, had historically been contested both by Al Qaeda in Iraq, Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM – a Shia group) and associated Iranian backed groups.²⁶ The south-eastern belt, which held several key lines of communication between Baghdad and the south, had been important for AQI and JAM, with AQI using the areas Arab Jabour, Hawr Rajab and Salman Pak to support operations in the capital, while JAM had infiltrated Shia populations in Mahmudiyah and Nahrawan, in east Baghdad.²⁷ In the south-west quadrant, Al Qaeda infiltrated the area to link up to its strongholds in Anbar governorate and used road and river networks to launch attacks, which it was able to conduct both south in Babil governorate, and north in Baghdad. The area was nicknamed the ‘Triangle of Death’ in 2005-06, with known battlegrounds in and around Mahmudiyah [Baghdad governorate], mixed areas to the south in Iskandariyah and Musayyib [in Babil governorate] and refuges in Arab Jabour and Hawr Rajab, south east of the city [of Baghdad].²⁸ Finally the north west belt had been a sanctuary for AQI since 2007, when the capital of ISI was displaced from Diyala to Tarmiyah [Baghdad governorate]. AQI used this area to move between Anbar, Salah al

²⁴ Institute for the Study of War (ISW), Baghdad belts, undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/baghdad-belts>, accessed 15 August 2016

²⁵ Institute for the Study of War (ISW), Baghdad belts, undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/baghdad-belts>, accessed 15 August 2016

²⁶ Institute for the Study of War (ISW), Baghdad belts, undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/baghdad-belts>, accessed 15 August 2016

²⁷ Institute for the Study of War (ISW), Baghdad belts: Southeast’, undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/southeast>, accessed 15 August 2016

²⁸ Institute for the Study of War (ISW), Baghdad belts: Southwest’, undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/southwest>, accessed 15 August 2016

Din and Diyala and to build bombs for use in Baghdad city. AQI also established 'quasi-legal structures' in the area, which constituted the 'entirety of AQI's political program.'²⁹

5.2.7 Previous Control of Terrain maps produced by the ISW showed areas in the 'Baghdad Belts' as being 'watched', including Abu Ghraib, Yusufiyah and Mada'in.³⁰ However, the latest map made no mention of these areas or their current control status.

5.2.8 An article in Al-Monitor, dated 11 March 2016, noted:

'Critical to understanding the security of Baghdad and the surrounding regions, there are six regions surrounding the capital from the north, west and southwest, forming what is known as the "Baghdad Belt."

'These regions are Latifiya, Taji, al-Mushahada, al-Tarmia, Arab Jibor and al-Mada'in, and they are mostly Sunni and considered "fertile terrorist soil," according to the deputy head of the security committee in Baghdad's provincial council, Saad al-Matlabi. He told Al-Monitor the areas lie along the borders with the Iraqi provinces of Salahuddin, Diyala and Anbar, where huge battles are still raging between Iraqi security forces and the Popular Mobilization Units against IS.

'Despite the constant reinforcement and the security plans for the Baghdad Belt, 30 IS fighters managed to reach Abu Ghraib city on the capital's outskirts and kill 13 Iraqi soldiers.

'A few days before this incident, the security forces decided to build a wall and set up new checkpoints around Baghdad, but the parliamentary Sunni blocs rejected this decision and dismissed it as an attempt to cause a rift.

'Shiite Anwar TV2, which broadcasts from Kuwait, reported in its Feb. 18 program "Sani'ou al-Hadath" that the "Baghdad Belt still harbors terrorism."³¹

5.2.9 A UNHCR report, dated May 2016, noted:

'ISIS reportedly uses its presence in Fallujah (Al-Anbar) to stage attacks into western Baghdad governorate, as demonstrated in late February 2016, when ISIS fighters reportedly launched a lightning offensive in the Abu Ghraib District of western Baghdad governorate, temporarily occupying several buildings and a grain silo. Confronted with an ISF counter offensive, ISIS reportedly quickly withdrew to its safe havens around Fallujah City. Despite having been pushed out of the southern Baghdad belts and its

²⁹ Institute of the Study for War (ISW), North West, undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/northwest>, accessed 15 August 2016

³⁰ Institute for the Study of War (ISW), Control of Terrain in Iraq: 1 May 2015, <http://iswiraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/05/control-of-terrain-in-iraq-may-1-2015.html>, accessed 15 August 2016

³¹ Al-Monitor, 'The rise of Islamic State sleeper cells in Baghdad', 11 March 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/03/iraq-baghdad-belts-harbor-islamic-state.html>, accessed 16 August 2016

stronghold in Jurf Al-Sakhr (northern Babel) in October 2014, ISIS is said to have re-established its presence south of Baghdad as demonstrated by its ability to launch attacks in southern Baghdad.³²

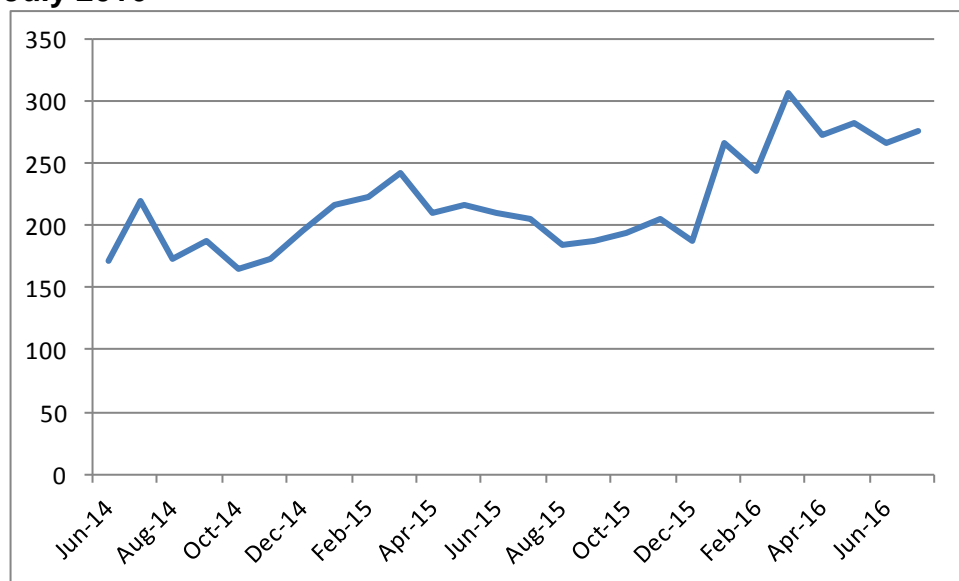
[Back to Contents](#)

6. Levels of violence

6.1 Security incidents (in Baghdad)

- 6.1.1 The following graphs, using data from [Joel Wing's Musings on Iraq](#), shows the number of security incidents in Baghdad³³ between June 2014 and July 2016.

Graph showing number of security incidents in Baghdad, June 2014 to July 2016



- 6.1.2 The [Iraq Body Count database](#) also document security incidents, although there is a lag in their data and the latest available data is from March 2016.

[Back to Contents](#)

6.2 Fatalities

- 6.2.1 The following graph, using data from [UN Iraq](#), shows civilians killed in Baghdad^{34 35} between June 2014 and July 2016:

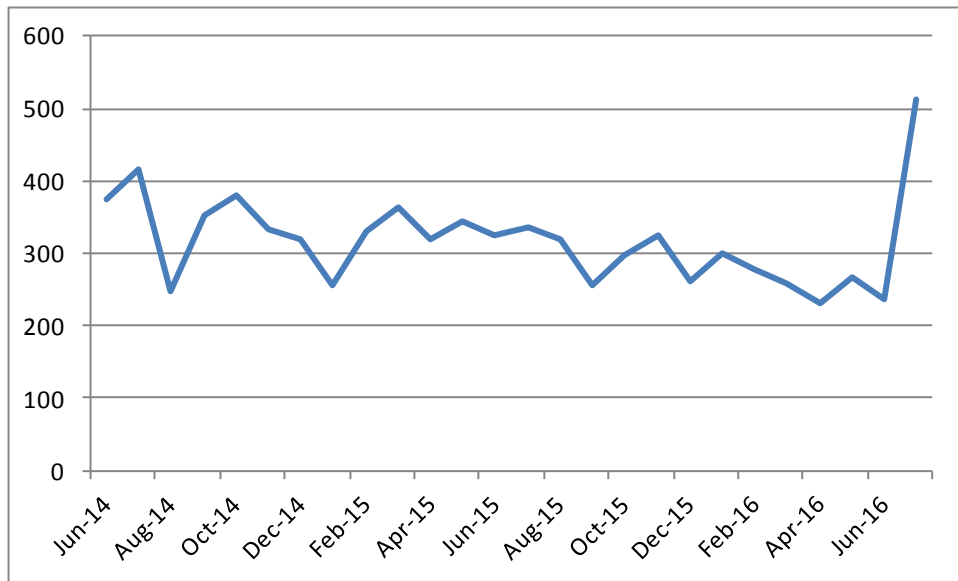
³² UNHCR, 'Relevant COI for Assessments on the Availability of an Internal Flight or Relocation Alternative (IFA/IRA) in Baghdad for Sunni Arabs from ISIS-Held Areas', p. 21, http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1465288084_575537dd4.pdf, accessed 16 August 2016

³³ Joel Wing does provide data on security incidents in the south and the KRI, but these typically occur infrequently and/or the data is at low levels.

³⁴ Data is collected from the worst-affected governorates, and therefore does not typically include the south or the KRI.

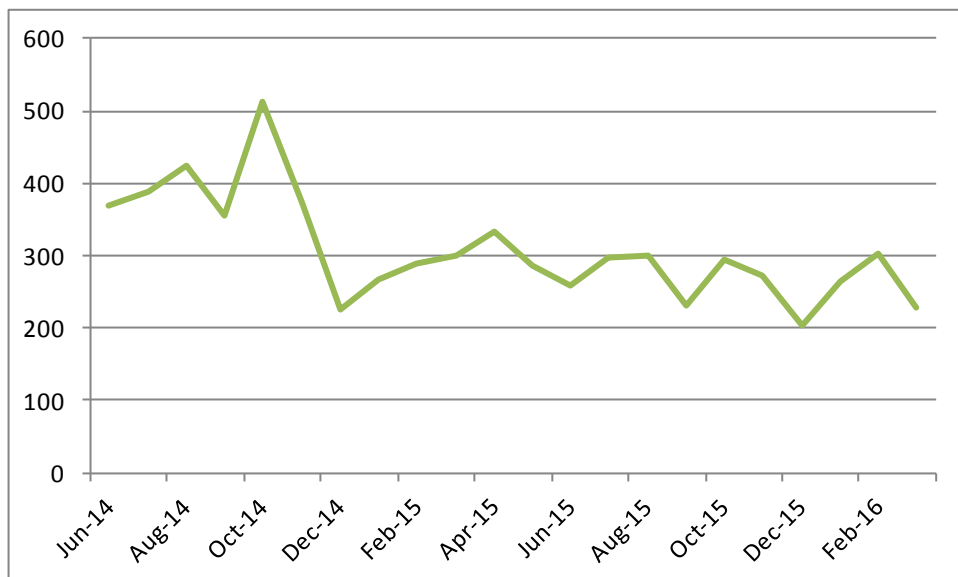
³⁵ Apart from UN Iraq and Iraq Body Count (IBC), Joel Wing does provide data on civilian fatalities in the south and the KRI, but these typically occur infrequently and/or the data is at low levels. Data from Joel Wing on civilian fatalities in Baghdad has not been used in this document. Generally, the data

Graph showing civilian casualties in Baghdad, June 2014 to July 2016, using data from UN Iraq



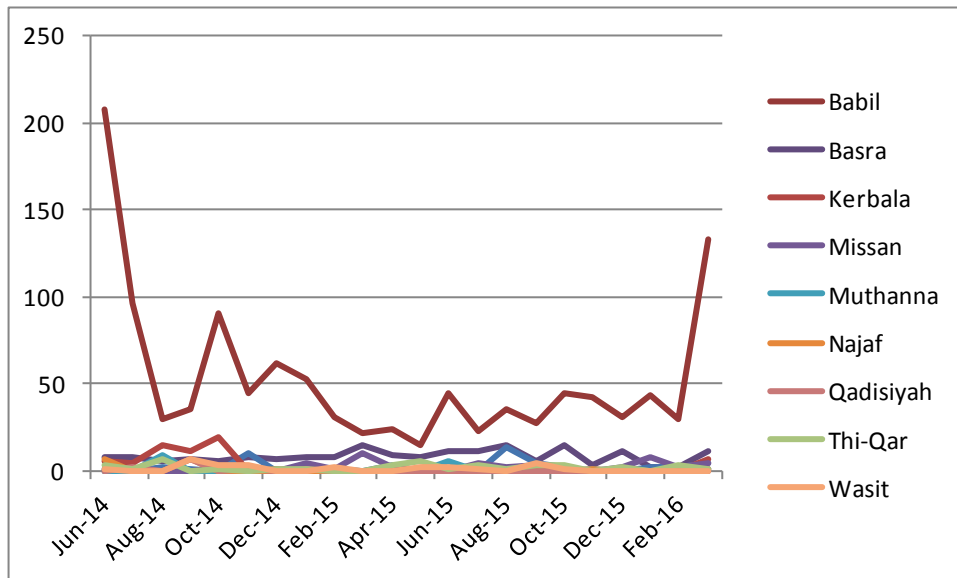
6.2.2 The following graphs, using data from [Iraq Body Count \(IBC\)](#), shows civilians killed in Baghdad, the south and the KRI between June 2014 and March 2016 (latest data at the time of August 2016):

Graph showing civilian casualties in Baghdad, June 2014 to July 2016, using data from Iraq Body Count (IBC)

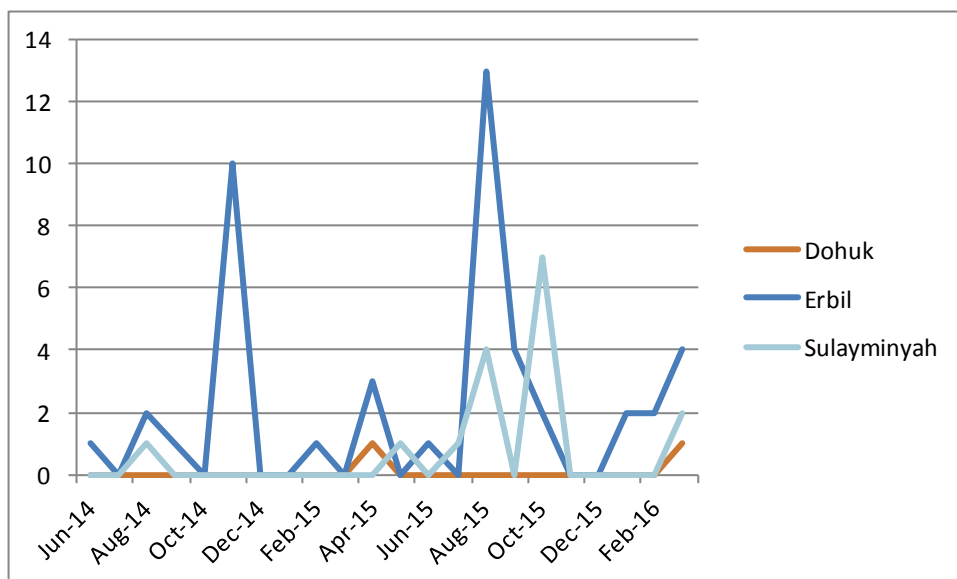


follows the same pattern as that provided by UN Iraq and Iraq Body Count (IBC), although at higher levels, reflecting differences in data collecting methodologies. Refer directly to the [blog](#) for more information. Data is found in monthly articles entitled 'Violence in Iraq [Month Year]'.

Graph showing civilian casualties in the southern governorates, June 2014 to July 2016, using data from Iraq Body Count (IBC)



Graph showing civilian casualties in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), June 2014 to July 2016, using data from Iraq Body Count (IBC)



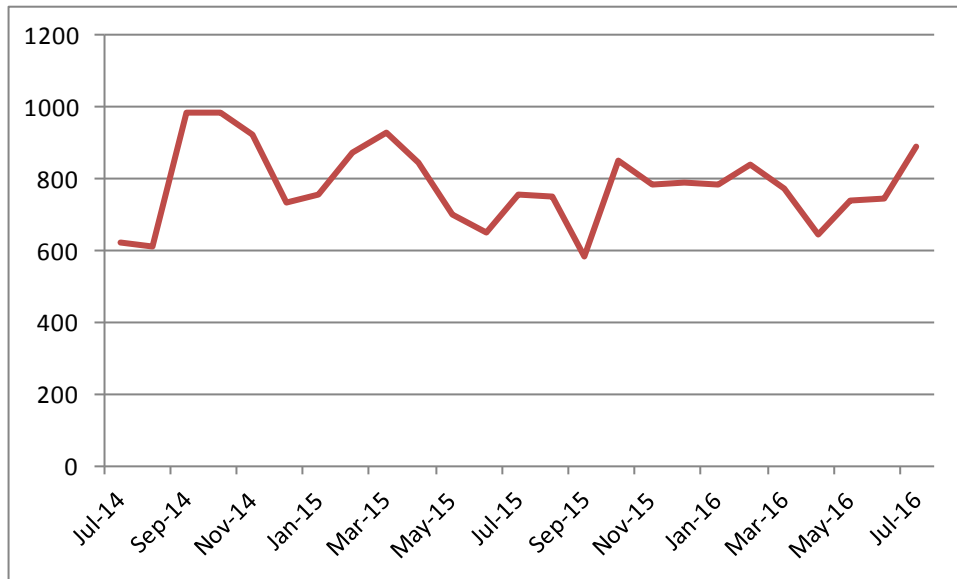
[Back to Contents](#)

6.3 Injuries (in Baghdad)

6.3.1 Using data from UN Iraq, the following graphs shows civilians injured in Baghdad^{36 37}, the south and the KRI between June 2014 and July 2016:

³⁶ Data is collected from the worst-affected governorates, and therefore does not typically include the south or the KRI.

Graph showing civilian injuries in Baghdad, June 2014 to July 2016



[Back to Contents](#)

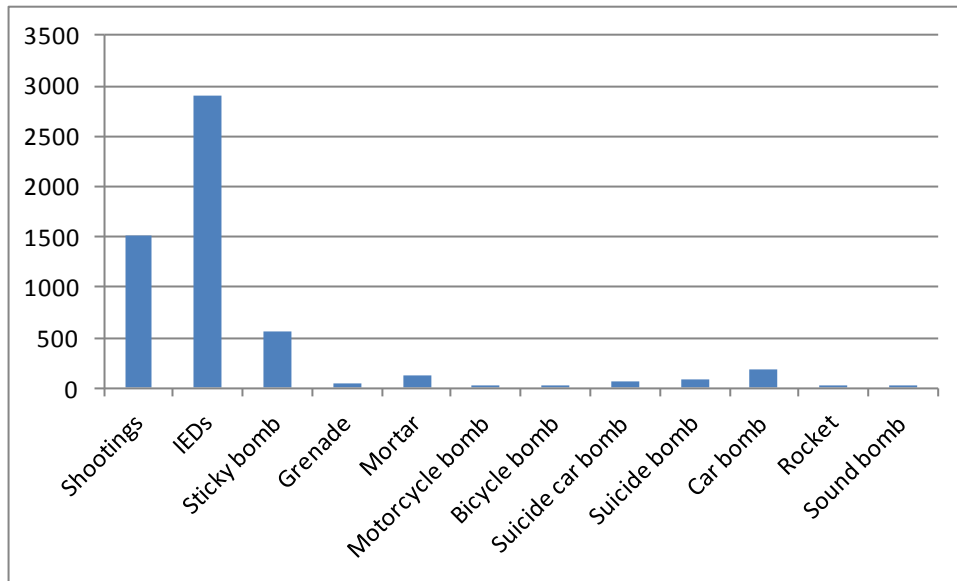
6.4 Nature of violence (in Baghdad)

6.4.1 The following tables, using data from Joel Wing's Musings on Iraq, shows the nature of violent attacks in Baghdad³⁸ for the period between June 2014 and July 2016:

³⁷ Apart from UN Iraq, Joel Wing does provide data on civilian injuries in the south and the KRI, but these typically occur infrequently and/or the data is at low levels.

³⁸ Joel Wing does provide data on the nature of violence in the south and the KRI, but these typically occur infrequently and/or the data is at low levels.

Chart showing nature of violent attacks in Baghdad, June 2014 to July 2016



[Back to Contents](#)

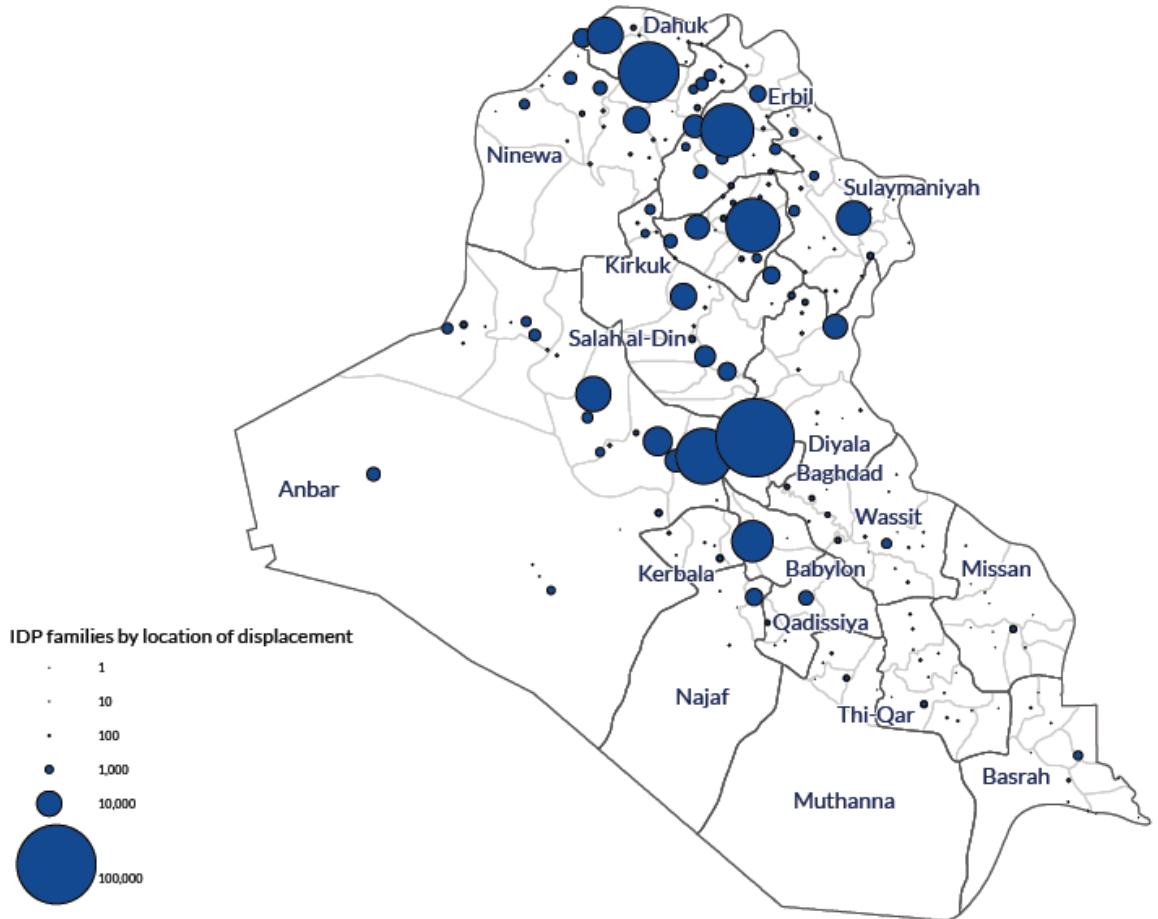
7. Displacement

7.1 Overview

7.1.1 The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) provided the following map showing the location of displaced families:

Map showing location of displaced families in Iraq, July 2016

1.0 NUMBER OF IDP FAMILIES BY DISTRICT OF DISPLACEMENT, JULY 2016



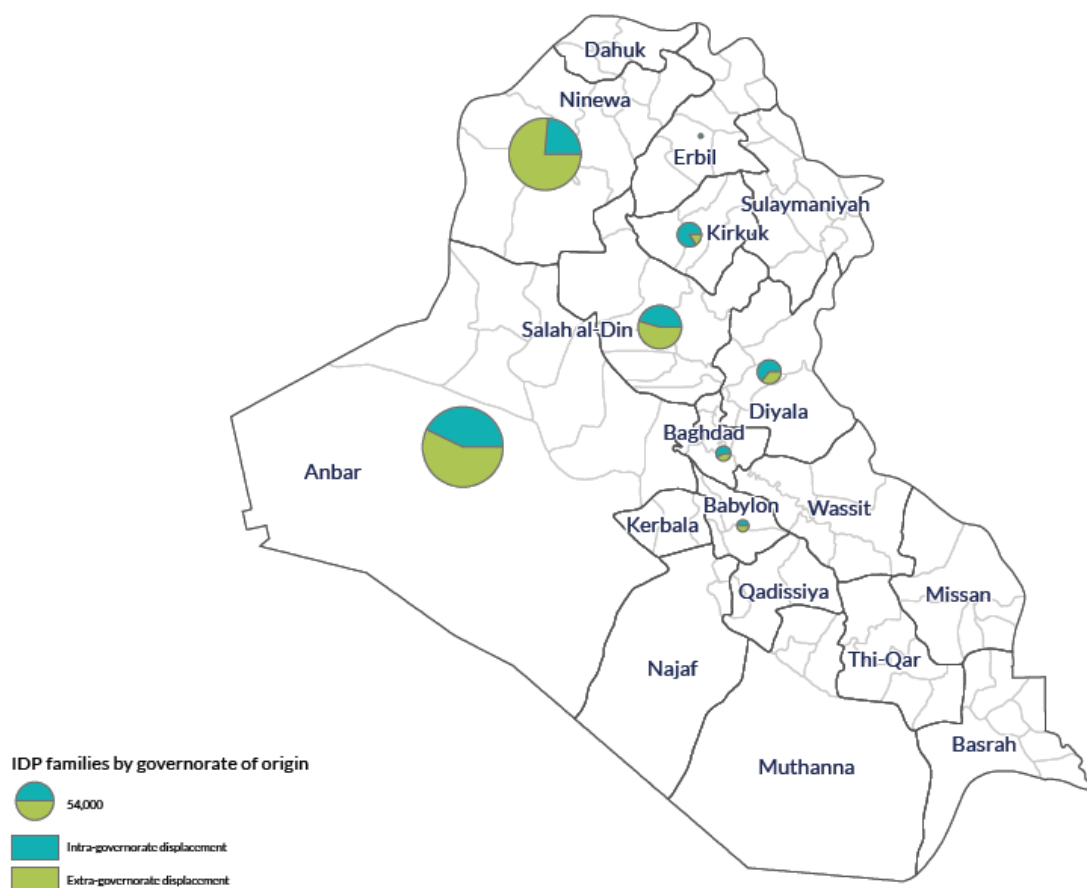
39

7.1.2 The IOM provided the following map showing the origin of displaced families:

³⁹ International Organisation for Migration, Iraq Mission, Displacement Tracking Matrix, DTM Round 50, July 2016, <http://iomiraq.net/dtm-page>, p. 2, accessed 4 August 2016

Map showing origin of displaced families, July 2016

2.0 NUMBER OF IDP FAMILIES BY GOVERNORATE OF ORIGIN, JULY 2016



40

7.1.3 The following table, using July 2016 data from IOM, shows the number of IDPs hosted in Baghdad, the southern governorates and the KRI:

Governorate	IDP families	IDP individuals	% of all IDPs in Iraq
Baghdad	86,950	521,700	15%
Basra	1,791	10,746	0%
Babil	9,553	57,318	2%
Kerbala	11,363	68,178	2%
Missan	1,005	6,030	0%
Muthanna	946	5,676	0%
Najaf	13,168	79,008	2%

⁴⁰ International Organisation for Migration, Iraq Mission, Displacement Tracking Matrix, DTM Round 50, July 2016, <http://iomiraq.net/dtm-page>, p. 4, accessed 4 August 2016

Qadissiyah	4,010	24,060	1%
Thi-Qar	1,537	9,222	0%
Wassit	4,107	24,642	1%
Dohuk	66,379	398,274	12%
Erbil	65,217	391,302	12%
Sulamaniyah	27,604	165,624	5%

7.1.4 For latest data see the [IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

7.2 Returns

7.2.1 The following table, using July 2016 data from IOM, shows the how many IDPs originate from Baghdad, the south or the KRI. There is only data for Baghdad and Erbil. IDPs do not originate from the other areas of the KRI, or from the south.

Governorate	Individuals	% of all IDPs in Iraq
Baghdad	49,740	1%
Erbil	4,314	0%

41

7.2.2 The IOM provided the following information, dated July 2016: 'Dynamics of return and displacement are independent from each other and largely happen in geographically distinct areas, with return trends limited to seven governorates: Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Erbil, Kirkuk Ninewa, and Salah al-Din.⁴²

7.2.3 58% of those displaced within Baghdad remain within the governorate. For Erbil it is 98%.⁴³

7.2.4 The IOM provided the following chart showing how many IDPs had returned to the seven governorates from which most Iraqis are displaced:

⁴¹ International Organisation for Migration, Iraq Mission, Displacement Tracking Matrix, DTM Round 50, July 2016, <http://iomiraq.net/dtm-page>, p. 5, accessed 4 August 2016. Most IDPs come from Anbar (43%) and Ninewah (34%).

⁴² International Organisation for Migration, Iraq Mission, Displacement Tracking Matrix, DTM Round 50, July 2016, <http://iomiraq.net/dtm-page>, p. 5, accessed 4 August 2016

⁴³ International Organisation for Migration, Iraq Mission, Displacement Tracking Matrix, DTM Round 50, July 2016, <http://iomiraq.net/dtm-page>, p. 5, accessed 4 August 2016

5.4 RETURNEES BY DISTRICT OF RETURN AND PERIOD OF DISPLACEMENT, JULY 2016

Governorate of return	Pre-June '14	June-July '14	August '14	Post September '14	Post April '15	Post March '16	Total
Anbar	13,842	10,344	0	36,720	23,796	70,866	155,568
Baghdad	0	0	9,288	21,342	0	0	30,630
Diyala	0	98,136	0	54,840	0	0	152,976
Erbil	0	0	15,384	0	0	0	15,384
Kirkuk	0	0	0	2,388	0	0	2,388
Ninewa	0	0	133,134	0	0	66	133,200
Salah al-Din	30,438	152,736	61,404	50,274	1,542	10,218	306,612
Total	44,280	261,216	219,210	165,564	25,338	81,150	796,758
Percentage	6%	33%	28%	21%	3%	10%	100%

44

[Back to Contents](#)

8. Human rights violations against civilians

The latest [joint-report of the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq \(UNAMI\) and the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#), published in January 2016 and which covers the period May to October 2015, gave detailed accounts of human rights abuses in Iraq, which are summarised below where indicated. Refer to the source for further information.

8.1 Baghdad

- 8.1.1 UNAMI/OHCHR reported that ‘a large number of IED-related civilian deaths were recorded in Baghdad, where such incidents occurred on a daily basis.’⁴⁵ For example, on 13 August, a VBIED detonated at the Jameela wholesale market in the Shi’a majority Sadr City, in the east of the city. According to reports, at least 45 people were killed and at least 72 wounded by the blast, for which Daesh claimed responsibility.⁴⁶
- 8.1.2 UNAMI/OHCHR noted that killings of men had taken place and that also ‘[m]any women were among the bodies that were recovered in Baghdad on a daily basis, the victims of unidentified killers. On 29 June, for example, the bodies of two women were found in different locations in Baghdad, both having died of gunshot wounds. On 5 September, in northwest Baghdad, the

⁴⁴ International Organisation for Migration, Iraq Mission, Displacement Tracking Matrix, DTM Round 50, July 2016, <http://iomiraq.net/dtm-page>, p. 12, accessed 4 August 2016

⁴⁵ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), ‘Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015’, January 2016, p. 29, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRreport1May31October2015.pdf>, accessed 16 August 2016

⁴⁶ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), ‘Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015’, January 2016, p. 15, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRreport1May31October2015.pdf>, accessed 16 August 2016

bodies of two children were found, one aged seven and the other 12. The children had reportedly been abducted by unidentified gunmen.⁴⁷

8.1.3 The same report also detailed cases of abductions. For example:

‘In Baghdad, on 25 May, four civilians were abducted by gunmen dressed in military uniforms at a checkpoint near the military academy, in Canal Street, eastern Baghdad. Also in Baghdad, the Acting Deputy Justice Minister, was abducted by black-clad gunmen on 9 September, in the Bunuk area, northeastern Baghdad. A senior official of the Ministry of Justice and four security guards were reportedly also abducted. All were eventually released. The perpetrators remained unknown at the time of reporting.⁴⁸

[Back to Contents](#)

8.2 The south

Babil

8.2.1 The Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, in a report on the south of Iraq dated May 2015, noted that ‘in the past few years, Babil was the most violent of the southern provinces. In the mainly Sunni northern part of Babil, but also in other parts of the province, enhanced security measures have been into force since 2013. The number of checkpoints increased, roads between towns were regularly closed to traffic, and curfews were imposed... Initially, Babil Province was not directly affected by the ISIL [Daesh] offensive launched in June 2014 but by the end of June, fighting erupted in the north of the province, at Buhairat... During the first months of 2015, bomb and other attacks still took place in the north of Babil province, with various targets...⁴⁹

8.2.2 The same source also described the security situation in various individual governorates:

⁴⁷ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), ‘Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015’, January 2016, p. 28, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRreport1May31October2015.pdf>, accessed 16 August 2016

⁴⁸ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), ‘Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015’, January 2016, p. 28, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRreport1May31October2015.pdf>, accessed 16 August 2016

⁴⁹ Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, COI Focus: Iraq – Security Situation in South Iraq, 29 May 2015, p. 18, http://www.cgra.be/sites/default/files/rapporten/coi_focus_iraq_security_situation_in_south_iraq_0.pdf, accessed 16 August 2016

Basra

'Tribal and sectarian violence escalated particularly in 2007 in Basra city. Only when it launched an offensive in 2008 was the Iraqi army able to break the power of Shi'a and tribal militias in the city...Despite sporadic terror attacks, the security situation in the province improved markedly during the last few years... As ISIL [Daesh] was stepping up its terror campaign against Shi'a targets in Baghdad, Basra city's Sunni minority was targeted by a number of violent attacks. In January 2014, Basra's provincial governor, Majid al-Nasrawi, announced the dismantling of some checkpoints in Basra city following the improved security situation... Basra province was not directly affected by ISIL's June 2014 offensive and there were no direct confrontations between ISIL militants and Iraqi troops.'⁵⁰

8.2.3 Kerbala

'Despite several attacks on Shi'a targets and rivalry between Shi'a militias, the violence in Kerbala province in 2006 and 2007 did not reach the same levels as in central Iraq. The intensity of the violence decreased significantly after security matters were transferred from the Coalition troops to the local police and the Iraqi armed forces. Over the period 2013-2014, a limited number of terror attacks were committed against Shi'a targets in the holy city of Kerbala. In 2013, 48 civilians were killed in Kerbala city, and 11 civilians between January and June 2014. Security measures were several times reinforced in 2013-2014 in the province. Especially during the Ashura festival, which is attended every year by tens of thousands of pilgrims, strict security measures are imposed...Although ISIL [Daesh]'s spokesman announced in the summer of 2014 that his movement would carry its offensive as far as Kerbala and Najaf, there were no large-scale armed confrontations between ISIL militants and Iraqi troops in Kerbala province. Security measures were enhanced in Kerbala and Iraqi troops were reinforced by volunteers...'⁵¹

8.2.4 Najaf

'In the summer of 2004, Najaf city saw fierce fighting between the Mahdi Army and the US-led coalition troops. Fighting again broke out in Najaf in 2007. As more and more American troops were leaving the province, the security situation stabilised and violence was limited to sporadic terrorist attacks. As ISIL [Daesh] intensified its terror campaign in 2013-2014,

⁵⁰ Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, COI Focus: Iraq – Security Situation in South Iraq, 29 May 2015, p. 21, http://www.cgra.be/sites/default/files/rapporten/coi_focus_iraq_security_situation_in_south_iraq_0.pdf, accessed 16 August 2016

⁵¹ Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, COI Focus: Iraq – Security Situation in South Iraq, 29 May 2015, p. 22, http://www.cgra.be/sites/default/files/rapporten/coi_focus_iraq_security_situation_in_south_iraq_0.pdf, accessed 16 August 2016

security measures were enhanced in Najaf. In October 2013, a new security plan was announced for the Eid al-Adha religious holiday...Although ISIL [Daesh]'s spokesman announced in the summer of 2014 that his movement would carry its offensive as far as Kerbala and Najaf, there were no large-scale armed confrontations between ISIL militants and Iraqi troops in Najaf province. Security measures were enhanced in the province and many Shi'a answered Ayatollah al-Sistani's call to take arms and to back the Iraqi armed forces. In the second half of 2014, suspects were repeatedly arrested during security operations in Najaf. On 12 September 2014, 12 persons were injured in a bomb attack in Najaf's al-Amir area. During the period from January to April 2015, suspected terrorists and other suspects were arrested during several security operations in Najaf city and in other places in the province.⁵²

8.2.5 Missan, Muthanna, Qaddisiyah, Thi-Qar and Wassit

'Sporadic terror attacks, usually small-scale, are committed mainly in the towns of Kut (Wassit province) and Nasiriya (Thi-Qar province)...With the increase of terror attacks in 2013-2014, security measures were enhanced in the region. In 2013, the police carried out several large-scale security operations in Wassit...The ISIL [Daesh] summer offensive of 2014 did not reach Wassit, Qadisiya, Thi-Qar, Missan or al-Muthanna province and there were no direct confrontations between ISIL militants and Iraqi troops. Violence in the region is limited to sporadic bomb attacks causing a relatively low number of civilian casualties. Arrests are regularly taking place during security operations in the region. The number of civilians killed in the five provinces remained low in 2015.⁵³

8.2.6 The source provided the following overall summary of the security situation in the southern governorates:

'The nine southern Iraqi provinces were not directly affected by the offensive launched by ISIL in central Iraq in June 2014, with the exception of the north of Babil province, where ISIL tried to open new lines of attack towards Baghdad south and southwest of the capital. This offensive was accompanied by numerous bomb attacks and led to heavy fighting in some towns. Although ISIL was unable to gain control over the north of Babil and the number of civilian casualties has markedly decreased since the beginning of 2015, the security situation in Babil province has not yet improved on a lasting basis. The fact that ISIL controls large areas in

⁵² Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, COI Focus: Iraq – Security Situation in South Iraq, 29 May 2015, p. 22, http://www.cgra.be/sites/default/files/rapporten/coi_focus_iraq_security_situation_in_south_iraq_0.pdf, accessed 16 August 2016

⁵³ Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, COI Focus: Iraq – Security Situation in South Iraq, 29 May 2015, p. 27, http://www.cgra.be/sites/default/files/rapporten/coi_focus_iraq_security_situation_in_south_iraq_0.pdf, accessed 16 August 2016

neighbouring Anbar province increases the risk of a new upsurge in violence.

'In the mainly Shi'a southern provinces of Najaf, Kerbala, Basra, Wassit, Qadisiya, Thi-Qar, Missan and al-Muthanna, there were no direct confrontations between ISIL and the Iraqi armed forces. The violence in these provinces was limited to sporadic terrorist attacks of decreasing frequency and intensity. The number of civilian casualties is significantly lower than in Babil province, and far below the levels reached in central Iraq, including Baghdad.'⁵⁴

[Back to Contents](#)

8.3 The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)

8.3.1 UNAMI/OHCHR noted that Dohuk had seen Turkish airstrikes targeting the Turkish PKK. Six corpses and eight wounded people were received on 1 August by a hospital in the town of Soran following an air raid by Turkish fighter jets on PKK targets in the village of Zarkel, Rawanduz area, east of Erbil.⁵⁵ In August, Turkish airstrikes allegedly hit Zharga and Mar Dawa villages, in the foot of the Qandil Mountains, in Pashdar district in Sulaymaniyah.⁵⁶

8.3.2 The same report reported that on 12 August Daesh allegedly used chemical weapons against Peshmerga forces in Makhmour district, Erbil. This was supported by claims from German military intelligence.⁵⁷

Further useful sources include:

- [Amnesty International](#)
- [Freedom House, Freedom in the World Report for 2016](#)
- [Human Rights Watch](#)

⁵⁴ Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, COI Focus: Iraq – Security Situation in South Iraq, 29 May 2015, p. 30, http://www.cgra.be/sites/default/files/rapporten/coi_focus_iraq_security_situation_in_south_iraq_0.pdf, accessed 16 August 2016

⁵⁵ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015', January 2016, p. 3, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRreport1May31October2015.pdf>, accessed 16 August 2016

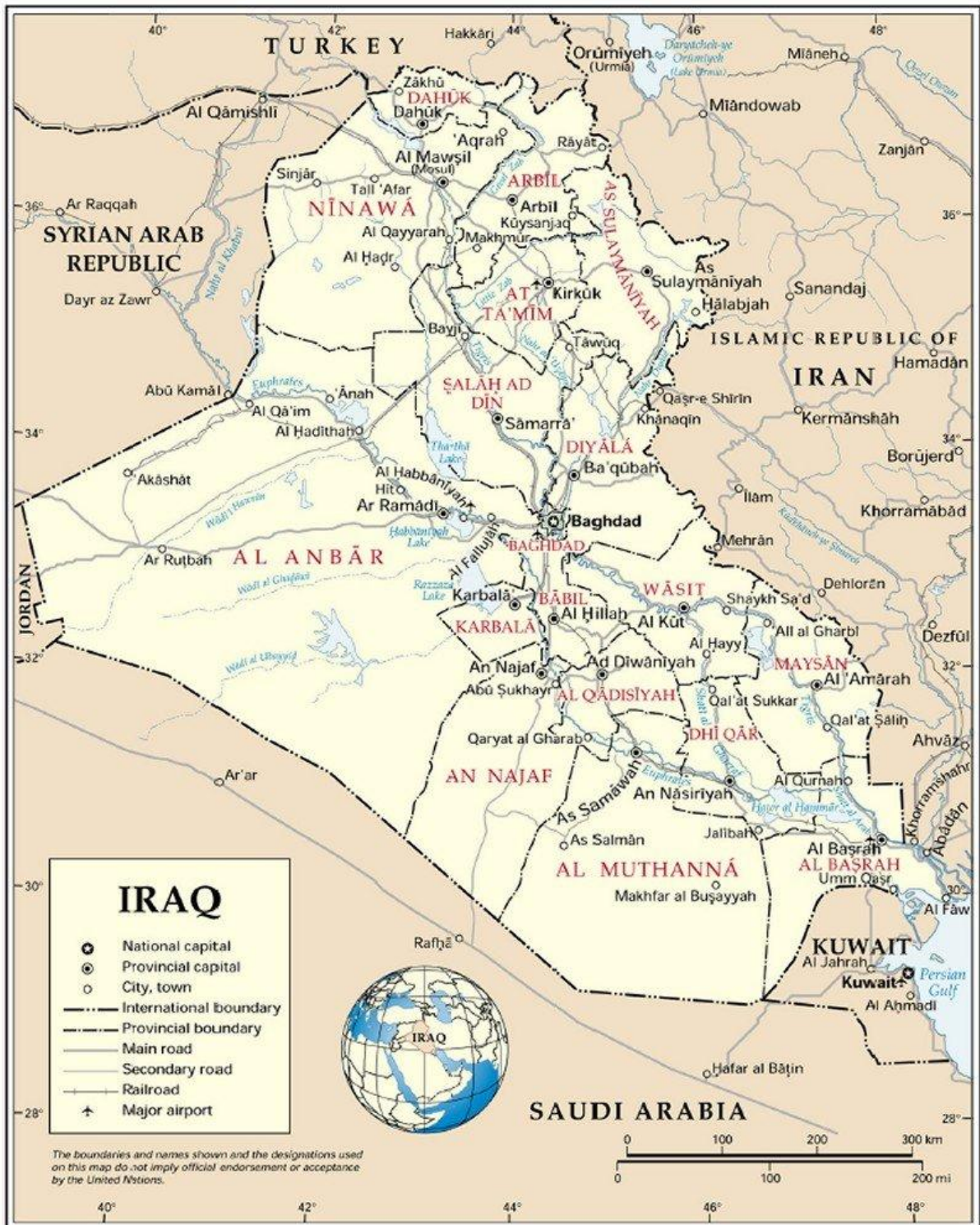
⁵⁶ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015', January 2016, p. 26, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRreport1May31October2015.pdf>, accessed 16 August 2016

⁵⁷ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015', January 2016, p. 17, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRreport1May31October2015.pdf>, accessed 16 August 2016

- [Musings on Iraq](#)
- [Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#)
- [UN High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#)
- [UN Security Council, Fourth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 2233 \(2015\)](#)
- [US State Department, Human Rights Report for 2015](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

Annex A: Map of Iraq



58

58 http://map.vbgood.com/Iraq/iraq-map_un1996.jpg

Annex B: Letter from the British Embassy Baghdad, 'Violence in Baghdad by area', 29 March 2016



British Embassy
Baghdad

International Zone
Baghdad

www.fco.gov.uk

29 March 2016

ISSUE: Violence in Baghdad by Area

This letter has been compiled by staff of the British Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq. The letter does not reflect the opinions of the author (s) nor any policy of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The author (s) have compiled this letter in response to a request from UKBA and any further enquiries regarding its contents should be directed to UKBA.

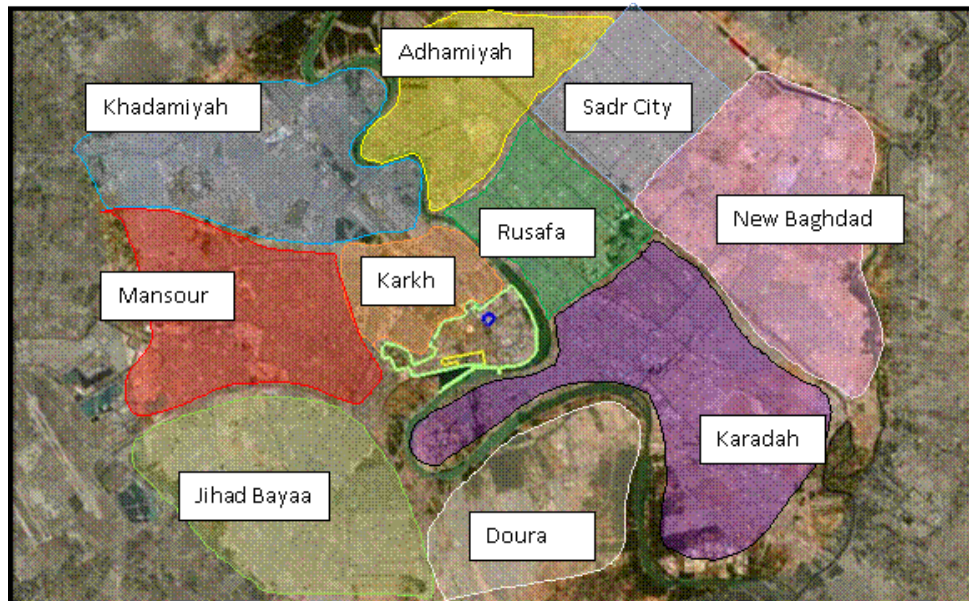
The Threat

Broadly speaking the threat in Baghdad can be broken down along ethno-sectarian lines between Sunni insurgent groups and Shia militias:

- **Sunni insurgents**, most notably Da'esh, remain tactically agile and continue to adapt and respond to the changing situation on the ground. Despite being constrained by logistical limitations and a lack of freedom of movement in Baghdad, Da'esh retains the capability to maintain its operational tempo in the capital. At present they are conducting a two-track campaign focussed on propagating sectarian discord through attacks targeting the majority Shia community in Baghdad whilst also attempting to undermine the Shia-led government by maintaining the perception of the Government of Iraq's (GoI) inability to maintain an effective security environment. On a tactical level this is played out in two different ways. Firstly, and accounting for the vast majority of their activity, their attacks are directed towards ISF and GoI personnel and civilians and comprise small roadside Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and Under Vehicle IEDs (UVIEDs) alongside Small Arms Fire (SAF) attacks, including assassinations. These attacks can be targeted or random in nature but have little practical risk of large-scale collateral damage. Targeted individuals are typically singled out for attack due to a lack of security

awareness – driving clearly marked government vehicles or wearing uniform off-duty. Secondly, Da'esh and associated Sunni insurgent groups maintain the intent and capability to conduct standalone and co-ordinated high-intensity attacks. These are usually in the form of Vehicle Borne IEDs (VBIEDs), large-yield roadside IEDs and suicide attacks utilising VBIEDs or explosive vests. These attacks are capable of causing numerous casualties; however their lethality is far reduced from the types of devices seen between 2004 to 2007. Targets for these high intensity attacks tend to be Shia gathering areas, including cafés/restaurants, markets and mosques. Historically Sunni insurgents have conducted Indirect Fire (IDF) attacks in the capital but these have been a rare occurrence. During early 2014 suspected members of the Jaish Riyal al-Tariq ar Naqshabandiya (JRTN – Naqshabanidya Army) conducted a number of IDF attacks targeting Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) however despite the assessment that they retain the intent and (limited) capability to conduct future attacks, recent attacks in the area of BIAP have been attributed to Shia militias.

- **Shia militia** groups (SMGs) including Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), Khatib Hezbollah (KH) and the Promised Day Brigades (PDB) were historically seen as more capable than their Sunni insurgent counterparts and tended to use far more technologically advanced methods of attack. AAH were also held responsible for some of the most high profile kidnapping operations in Iraq including that of five British nationals abducted from the Ministry of Finance in Baghdad in May 2007. Shia militia conducted their respective campaigns against a backdrop of a dynamic political agenda driven by Iran who utilised the militias as a proxy force in Iraq against the coalition force presence. As such Shia militia were historically focused on attacks targeting coalition forces utilising conventional IEDs, IDF and SAF. In addition they utilised the much more effective Explosively Formed Projectile (EFP) IEDs to defeat coalition force protection measures to great effect. They also conducted a high-tempo of IDF attacks targeting the US Embassy in Baghdad. Shia militia were also involved in sectarian motivated attacks in the capital during the height of the insurgency including operating the notorious Shia 'Death Squads' that killed large numbers of Sunni civilians in a campaign of effective 'ethnic cleansing' in Baghdad. Following their respective ceasefires in 2008 and the withdrawal of coalition forces in 2011 Shia militia groups remained largely quiet, although they did continue to conduct non-attributable attacks. Following the Da'esh advance on northern and western Iraq in June 2014 Shia militia have mobilised in vast numbers operating largely under the umbrella of the Popular Mobilisation Force (PMF). Whilst heavily involved in fighting alongside the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) on the frontlines against Da'esh, Shia militia also maintain a heavy presence on the streets of Baghdad where they are conducting routine security patrols and checkpoints.



Kadhamiyah: Formerly a Sunni area in the Saddam era. Sunnis were largely driven out by Shia militia during sectarian fighting in 2006/7. The area is still mixed, but now with a larger Shia populace than was previously the case. Due to the high presence of ISF, attacks in the area have decreased. But Da'esh and associated Sunni insurgents groups remain active in the area and as such we continue to see sporadic high intensity attacks targeting gathering areas such as markets, mosques and restaurants as well as the use of IEDs, including MAIEDs, and SAF targeting the Shia community. The presence of the Kadhamiyah Shrine also means that we see targeting of Shia pilgrims in the area. These attacks typically comprise IDF and low-level IEDs on transit routes. The mass mobilisation of Shia militia groups in response to Da'esh advance in northern and western Iraq in June 2014 has resulted in an increase in sectarian motivated attacks on the Sunni community in the area. These attacks typically comprise SAF attacks targeting both individuals and properties and hand grenade attacks against houses.

Mansour: Levels of violent activity in Mansour tend to be lower than elsewhere in Baghdad. This is due in part to the sectarian make-up of the area – predominately Sunni. The majority of attacks in the city continue to target Shia citizens and areas. The lower level of activity is also due to the high number of Gol buildings and foreign embassies situated in central Mansour and the high profile security presence deployed to secure them. The majority of attacks that do take place in Mansour typically comprise low-yield IEDs targeting ISF and Gol personnel and SAF attacks. IEDs can have either RC or CW initiators, though RC is much more likely. There also continues to be a steady tempo of MAIED/SAF attacks against ISF and Gol workers in the general area. Western Mansour, in particular the Ameriyah and Ghazaliyah areas was historically linked to AQL. It is assessed that Da'esh may well use these areas as safe-havens from which to house insurgents and from which to mount operations in the city.

Karkh: This is a mixed area with a strong security presence. Many of the government ministries and foreign embassies are located here, and as such security is better. Day to day activity is low, with incidents very rare. Occasionally Sunni extremists will mount attacks in this area, using VBIEDs to target government

ministries (the last attack was a complex suicide attack targeting the Ministry of Justice on 14 March 2013).

Jihad Bayaa: This used to be a mixed area but is now almost wholly Shia. It does however sit along a number of ethnic fault lines with the Sunni dominated Mansour district to its north and ethnically mixed Doura district to its east. As a result it has increasingly witnessed some of the highest levels of violence in the city. On a day to day basis attacks take place targeting food stores and cafes and roadside IEDs are common place. SAF attacks are also a frequent occurrence including both targeted assassinations and random drive by shoots. Jihad Bayaa is also frequently exploited by Sunni insurgent groups conducting co-ordinated VBIED attacks targeting the local community. There continues to be a high presence of Shia militia groups in the area and as such sectarian attacks targeting the Sunni community have increased.

Doura: Previously a Sunni area, though now mixed. The security situation is generally good but has deteriorated somewhat over recent months. Attacks are still lower than the nearby Jihad Bayaa district and are typically targeted IEDs or UVIEDs against ISF or Gol workers.

Karradah: The most prosperous area of the city, housing many business interests, government ministries and foreign embassies. The area is ethnically mixed though with Shia predominance in the east. Islamification attacks continue with a number of attacks targeting shops selling alcohol. Roadside IED and SAF attacks targeting both ISF and civilians also continue. There was a general increase in the tempo of attacks in central Karradah during 2015, however incident numbers have once again reduced. Southern Karradah does however continue. The area remains susceptible to VBIED attacks due to the number of high profile businesses, including banks and hotels housing foreign visitors, and government ministries. Da'esh remain active in the area and continue to conduct attacks. Recent high profile attacks include the targeting of the Palestine Hotel with a VBIED in May 2015 and a suicide attack targeting Shia civilians on 29 March 2016.

Rusafa: A largely mixed population in a busy area, containing both the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and Baghdad Police College (BPC). Attacks here are generally carried out by Sunni extremists targeting ISF with IEDs and MAIEDs. These attacks are again generally targeted and don't lead to collateral damage. Shia militia did use advanced IEDs in this area towards the end of 2011, though these were targeted against US private security companies and again did not lead to collateral damage. Previously attacks on US Forces or western interests were far bolder, with some allegations of ISF collusion. Da'esh and associated Sunni insurgent groups remain active in the area and continue to target Shia gathering areas including markets, mosques and restaurants with IEDs, VBIEDs and suicide attacks.

Adhamiyah: A largely Shia area with small Sunni enclaves. The threat is characterised by MAIEDs against ISF or government officials. The far eastern parts of Adhamiyah, along with Sadr City and New Baghdad are the areas where Sunni extremists are most likely to employ VBIEDs or IEDs in crowded areas in order to cause civilian casualties. These attacks are generally indiscriminate. SAF attacks targeting local civilians are also common place in the area with frequent reports of drive by shoots and assassinations.

Sadr City: Traditionally quite an impoverished area of Baghdad during the Saddam era, the area is entirely Shia. As such Sadr City is continually targeted by Da'esh and associated Sunni insurgent groups. VBIED and IED occur frequently. Criminality is also rife and SAF attacks are a frequent occurrence and probably attributable to in-fighting between different criminal gangs and Shia militia groups.

New Baghdad: An entirely Shia area of eastern Baghdad, which shares many of the characteristics of Sadr City although it is not as impoverished. New Baghdad continues to witness high levels of sectarian violence, including VBIED and suicide attacks targeting busy shopping areas. IED and SAF attacks are also relatively frequent albeit random in nature and not assessed as targeted.

British Embassy
Baghdad

This letter has been compiled by staff of the British Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq entirely from information obtained from the sources indicated. The letter does not reflect the opinions of the author (s) nor any policy of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The author (s) have compiled this letter in response to a request from UKBA and any further enquiries regarding its contents should be directed to UKBA.

Annex C: Map of Baghdad, Institute for the Study of War, 10 August 2012



59

[Back to Contents](#)

⁵⁹ Institute for the Study of War, 'Map of Baghdad', 10 August 2012, <http://www.understandingwar.org/map/map-baghdad>, accessed 16 August 2016

Version Control and Contacts

Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors then email [the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email [the Guidance, Rules and Forms Team](#).

Clearance

Below is information on when this version of the guidance was cleared:

- version **2.0**
- valid from **17 August 2016**

Changes from last version of this guidance

Updated COI. No change to the guidance.

[Back to Contents](#)

