

**Refugee Review Tribunal  
AUSTRALIA**

**RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE**

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**Questions**

- 1. Please provide a brief overview of the current security situation in al-Sulaimanyah. What groups/parties are in control, and is there any conflict there etc?**
- 2. What Muslim “fundamentalist” groups/parties are active in al-Sulaimaniyeh? How much power do they have?**
- 3. How common is the incidence (if any) of individuals being killed in al-Sulaimanyeh because of breaches of social mores, excluding “honour killing? How do the authorities deal with perpetrators?**
- 4. For a young single man from this area, what barriers are there to resettlement away from one’s home city, but within the Kurdish north?**

**RESPONSE**

**Location of Chwarbax/Chwar Bakh:**

Chwarbax is a quarter/neighborhood within Sulaymaniyah city centre. For the location of Chwarbax, referred to as Chwar Bakh, see the following maps published by the United Nations (‘Map of Sulaimaniya Streets & Blocks’ 2003, United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq website, 15 April [http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iraq/maps/Sulaymaniyah\\_Streets.pdf](http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iraq/maps/Sulaymaniyah_Streets.pdf) – Accessed 4 June 2009 – Attachment 1; ‘Sulaymaniyah City Center Zones, and Quarters Coding’ 2003, United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq website, 6 August <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iraq/maps/144%20A3%20Sulaymaniyah%20City%20Center%20Coding.pdf> – Accessed 4 June 2009 – Attachment 2).

Please note that Sulaymaniyah has multiple forms of spelling, including Sulaimaniya, Sulymaniya, Al-Sulaymaniyah. Sulaymaniyah will be used in this response.

**1. Please provide a brief overview of the current security situation in al-Sulaimanyah. What groups/parties are in control, and is there any conflict there etc?**

**Current security situation in Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) areas and in Sulaymaniyah Governorate:**

The US Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs website provides the following details on security in Northern Iraq in its travel warning dated 6 July 2009:

Northern Iraq

The security situation in Sulymaniya, Erbil, and Dohuk Governorates in northern Iraq has been relatively more stable than the rest of Iraq in recent years, but violence persists and conditions could deteriorate quickly. Even though there have been fewer terrorist attacks and lower levels of insurgent violence in Sulymaniya, Erbil, and Dohuk than in other parts of Iraq, the security situation throughout the country remains fluid. Violence associated with the status of Kirkuk is likely to continue, at least within Kirkuk. Insurgent groups continue to operate across the north. In 2008, multiple incidents occurred in Sulymaniya, Erbil, and Dohuk involving IEDs, rocket and mortar fire, vehicle bombs, and shootings, though none resulted in U.S. casualties. While many parts of northern Iraq have become more stable, Mosul continues to experience intense violence and instability ('Travel Warning: Iraq' 2009, U.S Department of State: Bureau of Consular Affairs website, 6 July [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/tw/tw\\_921.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_921.html) – Accessed 3 July 2009 – Attachment 3).

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office states in its current travel advice for Iraq that “despite largely effective policies countering terrorism in the region, extremist Islamist terrorist groups including Al-Qaida in Iraq and Ansar al Islam have planned and carried out infrequent attacks in the past”, including in Sulaymaniyah in March 2008:

The Kurdistan Region

The three provinces of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah form the Kurdistan Region and are administered by the Kurdistan Regional Government which, under the 2005 constitution, has considerable powers of autonomy within a federal Iraq. The Kurdistan Regional Government administered area has significantly greater stability, compared with the rest of Iraq.

However, despite largely effective policies countering terrorism in the region, extremist Islamist terrorist groups including Al-Qaida in Iraq and Ansar al Islam have planned and carried out infrequent attacks in the past. A network of Iran-based Kurdish extremists, affiliated with Al-Qaida in Iraq mount occasional cross-border attacks. The threat of terrorism and kidnap remains possible. Terrorist operations, including in the cities of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, have generally been conducted against Kurdistan Regional Government targets.

On 10 March 2008, a suicide vehicle bomb exploded outside Sulaymaniyah Palace Hotel. On 9 May 2007, a suicide vehicle bomb exploded outside the Ministry of Interior in Erbil. This was the first attack of its kind in Erbil in two years.

Shelling in the border areas with Turkey and Iran in the Kurdistan Region still occurs ('Travel Advice: Middle East and North Africa – Iraq' 2009, UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office website, 8 July <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by->

[country/middle-east-north-africa/iraq?ta=safetySecurity&pg=2](#) – Accessed 18 June 2009 – Attachment 4).

The current UN Security Council report on Iraq provides the following brief assessment on security in the Kurdistan regional government areas:

Overall, Kurdistan regional government areas remained stable, thereby allowing a more expansive programme of outreach activities by UNAMI and the United Nations country team. However, there is still a threat of militant elements infiltrating from other regions (UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 1830 (2008)*, S/2009/284, UNHCR website, 2 June p.13 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,,IRQ,,4a2e6e4c2,0.html> – Accessed 23 June 2009 – Attachment 5).

In May 2009 UK Home Office published the Country of Origin Information Report, *Kurdistan Regional Government Area of Iraq*. It collates over a dozen reports on the security situation in the region of northern Iraq under the control of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). These reports conclude that, in general, the security situation in this area is stable, especially in comparison to the rest of the country (UK Home Office 2009, *Kurdistan Regional Government Area of Iraq*, 21 May, ‘Security Situation: 8.01-8.16’ <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/iraq-kurdistan-220509.doc> – Accessed 22 June 2009 – Attachment 6).

The April 2009 *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers* provides the following detail on security in the three northern governorates, including Sulaymaniyah. This report also describes in brief the presence and activities of Islamic militant groups in Sulaymaniyah (Ansar al-Islam and al-Qa’ida in Iraq (IQA) as well as Kurdish groups fighting for separatists causes in Turkey (the PKK) and Iran (PJAK):

Since 2003, the three Northern Governorates of Dahuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah have largely escaped the violence and collapse of law and order prevalent in many parts of the Centre and South and remain relatively quiet and stable. The security situation, however, remains tenuous and unpredictable for a number of reasons as outlined below.

231. There is anticipation that the conflict prevailing in the other parts of the country, in particular in neighbouring Kirkuk, Ninewa and Diyala Governorates where the Sunni insurgency has not yet been defeated, might spill over. Accordingly, the local authorities employ strict security measures, including on the admission of persons not originating from the area. The KRG’s ambitions to expand its areas of control in the so-called “disputed areas” in the Governorates of Kirkuk, Ninewa, Salah Al-Din and Diyala on the basis of Article 140 of the Constitution are met with opposition by the Arab and Turkmen communities in the concerned areas, but also the central Government has made it clear that it will not tolerate the Kurdish security forces’ presence outside the Kurdistan Region. In some areas of the Central Governorates, where Kurdish parties already exert de facto full or partial control (e.g. Kirkuk, Khanaqeen), attacks on party and security offices and representatives are common.

232. Relations between the KRG and the Central Government have soured over the last year over the extent of the Kurdistan Region’s autonomy and the distribution of power and resources between the two entities.

233. The reported presence of several thousands PKK [Kurdistan Workers Party] and PJAK [Party for Free Life in Kurdistan] fighters in remote mountain areas of Northern Iraq leads to

frequent cross-border shelling campaigns by Iranian and Turkish forces, causing material damage as well as limited civilian casualties and (mostly temporary) displacement.

234. Radical Islamic militants, offshoots from Ansar Al-Islam, a home-grown indigenous Kurdish Islamist Movement, that seek to transform Iraq into an Islamic state based on a rigid Salafi ideology, reportedly have a limited presence in the Kurdistan Region, mainly in **Sulaymaniyah Governorate** near the Iraqi-Iranian border. The group was attacked by Coalition and Kurdish forces during the 2003 invasion for reportedly providing a safe haven to AQI. While Ansar Al-Islam (and its offshoot Ansar Al-Sunna) is mainly active in some areas of the Central Governorates, it is also accused of involvement in several (suicide) attacks in the Kurdistan Region in recent years, mainly directed against PUK and KDP officials as well as attacks on border guards on the Iraqi-Iranian border. Ansar Al-Islam at least temporarily cooperated with AQI and both groups are held responsible for a number of attacks in the Region since 2003. Threats from AQI and Ansar Al-Islam have prompted the KRG authorities to implement increased security measures, including by constructing a tunnel and security barricades segregating Erbil from Kirkuk and Ninewa Governorates and the deployment of 1,000 Peshmerga soldiers to the border with Iran in an attempt to stop possible infiltrations. Nevertheless, militant groups continued to have limited abilities to launch attacks in 2008, including on 14 May 2008, when a bomb exploded at a sports ground in the town of **Raniya in Sulaymaniyah Governorate**, seriously injuring three children who were playing football. On 10 March 2008, a suicide car bomber blew himself up outside the luxury Palace Hotel, owned by the PUK, in **Sulaymaniyah City**, killing one person and wounding 30 people, including the city's security chief, Hassan Nouri. At the end of December 2008, the Kurdish authorities announced the arrest of eight alleged Islamic militants with links to Ansar Al-Islam in Sulaymaniyah, who had reportedly confessed their intent to carry out attacks. **Islamist groups are also alleged to target individuals, including for their outspoken views or perceived "un-Islamic" behaviour.** On 1 August 2008, journalist Amanaj Khalil of the weekly Rudaw survived a shooting attack near **Sulaymaniyah**. Reportedly, he had received death threats in relation to an article in which he had written about the links between a Kurdish Islamic organization and the terrorist group Ansar Al-Islam. On 16 December 2007, gunmen blew up a liquor store in the District of Kifri, but no casualties were reported. In February 2007, Houzan Mahmoud, a Kurdish women activist reportedly received death threats by e-mail signed by Ansar Al-Islam.

235. Despite the KRG authorities' commitment to respect human rights in their areas, serious violations of human rights continue to take place with specific groups being targeted, including journalists, persons accused of being affiliated with Islamist armed groups, and women. Journalists and media organizations have repeatedly claimed that press freedom is restricted and that criticism of the ruling parties can lead to physical harassment, arrest and imprisonment on fabricated charges. Furthermore, in unofficial detention centres run by the political parties' security and intelligence apparatus, detainees, in particular persons accused of being affiliated with Islamist armed groups, are held incommunicado and without judicial review of their detention for prolonged periods of time. The use of torture and other forms of ill-treatment have also been reported. The situation of women is another area of concern as so-called "honour killings" and other harmful traditional practices occur at alarmingly high levels Sulaymaniyah (UNHCR 2009, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*, April, pp.132-133 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,...IRQ,,49f569cf2,0.html> – Accessed 23 June 2009 – Attachment 7).

A 22 April 2009 report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) provided the following on security in Sulaymaniyah and the KRG area:

**Sulaymaniyah:** (Average daily attacks: 12/1/07-2/22/08 = 0.02; 2/23/08-5/31/08= 0.02)  
Generally, this province experiences minimal violence and low incidence of attack. DoD reported that there were only two attacks from the end of February 2008 to the end of May 2008. However, Iran continues to launch air strikes against Kurdistan Workers' Party strongholds located along the border. Like the other KRG provinces, Sulaymaniyah achieved Regional Iraqi Control in May 2007. (p.51)

...Assessment of the Security Environment – Kurdistan Regional Government Area

The KRG area remains the most stable and least violent in Iraq. This is mainly a result of the homogenous Kurdish population and the presence of the Kurdish Police and the regional security forces, or Peshmerga. The Peshmerga are well equipped and trained, and they remain dedicated to the security of the KRG region. Nevertheless, occasional attacks do occur in the region. Furthermore, the presence of Peshmerga forces in parts of some non-KRG provinces (e.g., Khanaqin in Diyala) has increased tensions between the GoI and the KRG and between Arabs and Kurds, hampering political cooperation. The situation in Khanaqin remains calm, with open lines of communication between Kurdish and GoI security forces. The increase of security incidents in Jalula and As Sadiyah, however, are of concern. IEDs targeting ISF, Coalition forces, and political leaders have increased in areas that are largely patrolled by the Jalula Emergency Response Battalion.

These assessments do not take account of new forms of violence and instability that could grow out of tensions between Kurd and Arab, intra-Shi'ite power struggles, mishandling of the Sons of Iraq or a host of other issues. Serious questions also emerge over the future of mixed areas – particularly Baghdad, Diyala, and Salah al-Din provinces. (p.57)

(Cordesman, A. H. and Mausner, A. 2009, 'How Soon Is Safe? Iraqi Force Development and "Conditions-Based" Us Withdrawals', Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) website, 20 April, pp.51, 57

[http://www.csis.org/component/option.com\\_csis\\_pubs/task/view/id,5420/](http://www.csis.org/component/option.com_csis_pubs/task/view/id,5420/) – Accessed 22 June 2009 – Attachment 8).

An April 2009 International Organization for Migration (IOM) Emergency Needs Assessments report on IDPs stated that the "Security in Sulaymaniyah remains stable" (IOM 2009, 'Iraq Assessments & Statistics Report: Emergency Needs Assessments', IOM-Iraq website, 1 April, p.19 <http://www.iom-iraq.net/Library/IOM%20Iraq%20Displacement%20Assessments%20and%20Statistics%201%20Apr%202009.pdf> – Accessed 22 June 2009 –Attachment 9).

A 23 May 2009 report by the Command Risks Management/AKE organisations indicated that there is an "ongoing low risk of terrorist attacks in the cities of al-Arbil, As –Sulaymaniah and the wider Kurdish provinces" and "ongoing risk" of attacks by the Turkish and Iranian militaries against PKK and PJAK:

Areas of Concern: borders with Turkey and Iran; as-Sulaymaniyah and al-Arbil town centres.

Key risks: military assault, air strikes, shelling, civil unrest, politically motivated assassination.

Likely targets: PKK interest, PJAK interests, large crowds, key political figures.

There is an ongoing risk of cross-border shelling, air strikes and ground incursions by the Turkish and Iranian militaries into the Kurdish provinces of al-Arbil, ad-Dahuk, and as-Sulaymaniyah, but such incidents are only likely to implicate isolated mountainous areas.

Although no cause for alarm, there is also ongoing low risk of terrorist attacks in the cities of al-Arbil, as –Sulaymaniah and the wider Kurdish provinces (Command Risks Management/AKE 2009, ‘CRM/AKE Iraq Security Briefing’, Euro-Mediterranean Association for Cooperation and Development (EMA) website, 23 May [http://ema-hamburg.org/media/Irak-Wirtschaftstag\\_09/Irak230509.pdf](http://ema-hamburg.org/media/Irak-Wirtschaftstag_09/Irak230509.pdf) – Accessed 22 June 2009 – Attachment 10).

In addition to the attacks in 2008 reported above in Attachment 7, in October 2005 several bomb blasts occurred in Sulaymaniyah city: a suicide car bomb attacked the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs in the city, and a separate attack was made against a senior Kurdish PUK politician in a highway west of the city (‘Bomb blasts hit Iraqi Kurdistan’ 2005, *BBC News*, 25 October [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4374468.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4374468.stm) – Accessed 17 June 2009 – Attachment 11).

### **Political parties and groups in Sulaymaniyah:**

The two principal political parties in the northern Kurdistan region of Iraq and within the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) are Massoud Barzani’s Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Jalal Talabani’s Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The PUK is the predominant political party in the southern and eastern areas of the KRG bordering Iran, which includes the Governate and city of Sulaymaniyah, while the KDP is stronger in the northern areas bordering Turkey. The PUK party’s political bureau is based in the city of Sulaymaniyah (Katzman, K. 2009, ‘The Kurds in Post-Saddam Iraq’, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, The Federation of American Scientists (FAS) website, 6 April, p.1 <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22079.pdf> – Accessed 17 June 2009 – Attachment 12; UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2007, ‘Governorate Assessment Report Sulaymaniyah Governorate’, UNHCR website, September, p.7 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/471f4c9c27.html> – Accessed 17 June 2009 – Attachment 13; Gunter, M. 2007, ‘Intra-Kurdish Disputes in Northern Iraq’, *Terrorism Monitor Volume*, vol. 5, iss. 9, The Jamestown Foundation website, 10 May [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=4148](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4148) – Accessed 17 June 2009 – Attachment 14; ‘Bomb blasts hit Iraqi Kurdistan’ 2005, *BBC News*, 25 October [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4374468.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4374468.stm) – Accessed 17 June 2009 – Attachment 11; for Sulaymaniyah as the “stronghold” and political bureau see: Fayad, M. 2009, ‘Talabani to Retire after End of Term’, *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 5 March <http://www.aawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=1&id=16606> – Accessed 22 June 2009 – Attachment 15).

Michael Gunter, writing for The Jamestown Foundation’s *Terrorism Monitor* in 2007, adds that: “Historically...the PUK...is supposedly more progressive (even socialistically inclined), less tribally-based of the two parties”:

Historically, of the two major parties, the KDP is supposedly more conservative, traditional, nationalistic, tribally-based and centered in the northwestern Kurmanji (Bahdinani)-speaking area of Iraqi Kurdistan. The PUK, on the other hand, is supposedly more progressive (even socialistically inclined), less tribally-based and centered in the southeastern Sorani-speaking area of Iraqi Kurdistan. In addition, the Barzani power base was originally built in part upon its Naqshbandi Sufi roots, while Talabani’s power base was originally made up of adherents of the rival Qadiri order. To some extent, these differences, although real, were always exaggerated. Today, they have clearly narrowed. The competition presently between the two parties stems mostly from the sheer inertia of the past and is to a large extent simply over

power and the patronage rewards it grants (Gunter, M. 2007, 'Intra-Kurdish disputes in Northern Iraq', *Terrorism Monitor*, vol.5, iss.9, The Jamestown Foundation website, 10 May [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=4148](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4148) – Accessed 17 June 2009 – Attachment 14).

Greater detail on the political landscape in the Governorate of Sulaymaniyah is provided in a September 2007 UNHCR Governorate Assessment Report. It includes reference to other political parties active in Sulaymaniyah, including Islamic-based parties:

The Governorate of Sulaymaniyah is part of the area administered by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), based in Erbil. The KRG has constitutionally recognized authority over the Governorates of Erbil, Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah, as well as de facto authority over parts of Diyala, Ninewa and Kirkuk Governorates.

The predominant political party in the Governorate of Sulaymaniyah is the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK, known in Kurdish as Yaketi Nishtimani). Other political parties active in Sulaymaniyah include the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), the Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party, the Toilers' Party, the Conservative Party, the Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG), the Kurdistan Islamic Movement, the Kurdistan Communist Party, the Iraqi Communist Party and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).

Until January 2006, the Governorate of Sulaymaniyah was governed by a PUK-led administration, while the Governorates of Erbil and Dahuk were governed by a KDP-led administration. An agreement between the PUK and the KDP on the joint administration of the KRG was reached on 21 January 2006 and the KRG assumed office on 7 May 2006.

The governing body of Sulaymaniyah is the Governorate Council, elected on 30 January 2005. The Council is made up of 41 members, consisting of an executive body (Governor and Deputy Governor) and legislative (members of Governorate Council). The council holds weekly meetings every Thursday to discuss projects and activities. Unanimity is required before proposals can be passed to the Governor for implementation.

The Council's 41 seats are divided among four parties: the PUK holds 28 seats, the KDP five seats, the KIU five seats and the KIG three seats. Since the PUK owns the majority of the seats, it occupies the posts of Head of Council and Deputy. Sherzah Abdul-Hafiz Sharif is Head of the Governorate Council and his Deputy is Kawa Abdulla Ali. In addition to the 41 Council members, the Governorate Council employs four staff, including the Council Secretary, Nawzad Asaad.

The PUK, as part of the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan, is also represented in the Iraqi Government of Prime Minister Al-Maliki and the Council of Representatives, and PUK founder and Secretary-General, Jalal Talabani, became the President of Iraq on 6 April 2005 (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2007, 'Governorate Assessment Report Sulaymaniyah Governorate', UNHCR website, September, pp.7-8 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/471f4c9c27.html> – Accessed 17 June 2009 – Attachment 13).

Voting results from the most recent January 2005 elections for Sulaymaniyah Governorate Council are supplied in a report by The Washington Institute, published in April 2008, providing an indication of the level of support for each of these parties at that time:

#### 18. Sulaymaniyah

Governor: Dana Ahmed Majid, a member of PUK

PARTY	VOTES	SEATS
Patriot Union of Kurdistan	485,718	28
Kurdistan Islamic Union	75,008	5
Islamic Group of Kurdistan	53,088	5
Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq	91,578	3
Communist Party of Kurdistan	8,192	
TOTAL VALID BALLOTS	731,323	41
INVALID BALLOTS	13,189	

(Source: The Washington Institute 2008, 'Provincial Politics in Iraq: Fragmentation or new Awakening – Annexes', April, p.16

<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/html/newsletterImages/PF81Annexes.pdf> – Accessed 18 June 2009 – Attachment 16).

The functions of the Provincial Councils are summarised in the recent April 2009 *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*:

Provincial Councils are the governorates' governing body. They have jurisdiction over all of the districts in a given governorate and elect the provincial governor. Under the Provincial Powers Law, provincial councils and governors yield significant authority. The councils have the power to make laws for the governorate and to allocate funds for projects within that governorate. They are also a prime source of patronage through which government jobs, social benefits and contracts are distributed. Furthermore, the provincial council and governor appoint and dismiss provincial police chiefs and senior security officials in the governorate. Each provincial council is comprised of 25 seats, plus one seat for every 200,000 people (for more than 500,000 people) (UNHCR 2009, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*, April, p. 67, n.240

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,...IRQ,,49f569cf2,0.html> – Accessed 23 June 2009 – Attachment 7).

The US Department of State's *2008 Human Rights Report: Iraq*, released on 25 February 2009, states that the KDP and the PUK each have separate security units and personnel under separate Ministries of Interior, with the PUK controlling the ministry in Sulaymaniyah:

Pending further progress on implementing the Unification Plan for the KRG, the two main parties of the Kurdish region maintained MOI Peshmerga units as regional guards outside the control of the KRG, internal security units (Asayish), and intelligence units. KRG security forces and intelligence services were involved in the detention of suspects in KRG-controlled areas. The variety of borders and areas of authority remained a cause of confusion, and therefore concern, with regard to the jurisdiction of security and courts.

The KRG functioned with two party-based Ministries of Interior. **The PUK Party controlled the Ministry with oversight of the province of Sulaymaniyah**, and the KDP controlled the Ministry with oversight of the provinces of Erbil and Dohuk. KRG officials stated that unification of the party-based Ministries of Interior was their goal but missed two self-announced deadlines for doing so during the year (US Department of State 2009, *2008 Human Rights Report: Iraq*, 'Role of the Police and Security Apparatus', 25 February – Attachment 17).

Further general information on the security forces in the KRG area is given question two of July 2009 *Research Response IRQ35023* (RRT Research & Information 2009, *Research Response IRQ35023*, 2 July – Attachment 18).

## Upcoming Kurdistan Elections:

Whilst the rest of Iraq voted in January 2009 for provincial councils in 14 of its 18 provinces, the three Kurdish provinces of Erbil, Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah are expected to hold provincial council elections in January 2010. Parliamentary elections are set for 25 July 2009. According to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq website, on “25 July [2009] both the Kurdistan parliamentary and presidential elections will occur. These will be the first elections in the KRG since 2005” (‘Latest Information on the Elections in Iraq’ (undated), United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq website

<http://www.uniraq.org/electoral/IraqElections.asp> – Accessed 18 June 2009 – Attachment 19; ‘Kurdish parliamentary slate takes shape’ 2009, *Middle East Times*, 15 June [http://www.metimes.com/Security/2009/06/15/kurdish\\_parliamentary\\_slate\\_takes\\_shape/bfd/](http://www.metimes.com/Security/2009/06/15/kurdish_parliamentary_slate_takes_shape/bfd/) – Accessed 18 June 2009 – Attachment 20).

Katzman, writing in April 2009 on the implications of the January 2009 provincial elections results held in other parts of Iraq, has concluded that “It is likely that the differences between the Kurds and the central government will widen as a result of the January 31, 2009 provincial elections”:

### Implications of the Provincial Election Results

It is likely that the differences between the Kurds and the central government will widen as a result of the January 31, 2009 provincial elections. Because Sunni Arabs fully participated in these elections, the Kurdish influence in the two provinces of Nineveh and Diyala – the location of several disputed territories – was sharply reduced. In Nineveh province, the Kurds have essentially lost control of the provincial council and provincial administration. Working control of the 37 seat council will likely go to a Sunni Arab slate called Al Hadba’a, which campaigned on a platform of reducing Kurdish influence in the province and refusing to compromise on disputed territories located in Nineveh. Al Hadba’a won 19 out of the 37 seats of the provincial council, meaning one of its members is likely to be selected governor of the province. In addition, the strong showing of Maliki’s list has given him new legitimacy and confidence. He has, since the election, appointed military leaders in Kirkuk and other parts of northern Iraq that perceive their mission as pushing Kurdish peshmerga forces further north and out of Arab areas. In Diyala Province, the Kurdistan Alliance fared better than it did in Nineveh. It came in third, but with only 6 seats out of the 29 on the provincial council there. The mainstream Sunni Arab bloc called the Accord Front (“Tawafuq”), took the first position with 9 seats. These and other parties are attempting to form coalitions with Maliki’s party (which won only 2 seats in Diyala), but the Kurds are certain not to end up with control of the province’s administration. This poorly positions the Kurds to assert political control over Kurdish-inhabited towns in the province, such as Khanaqin (Katzman, K. 2009, ‘The Kurds in Post-Saddam Iraq’, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, The Federation of American Scientists (FAS) website, 6 April, p.7 <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22079.pdf> – Accessed 17 June 2009 – Attachment 12).

According to a May 2009 *AFP* news article, the upcoming parliamentary elections are “likely to redraw the local political map and bring factional violence to the otherwise calm region”:

Iraq’s autonomous Kurds go to the polls this summer in an election likely to redraw the local political map and bring factional violence to the otherwise calm region.

The two Kurdish parties that have dominated politics for decades will confront new challengers in the election for the regional parliament, including from their own ranks, and few expect them to bow out peacefully.

Some are looking to the rest of Iraq, which has weathered years of sectarian attacks and insurgent bombings since the 2003 US-led invasion, as a model after it held peaceful provincial elections at the start of the year.

“The Kurds need to learn the lesson and move towards the more civil and peaceful rivalries that prevailed among the different Iraqi factions,” said Shaswar Karim, a 60-year-old shopkeeper in the city of Sulaimaniyah.

“What worries us is the beginning of the hurtful language and harsh accusations between the different lists and political powers in the media, which indicates there may soon be violence between the competing factions.”

The last time elections to Kurdistan’s parliament were held in 2005 the two main parties -- the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led by Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of regional president Massud Barzani -- formed a joint list that won 80 of the 111 seats.

Ten seats are reserved for the region’s Turkmen, Christian and Yazidi minorities. **The Islamic Union of Kurdistan won nine seats, the more radical Islamic Group of Kurdistan gained six seats, and three smaller left-wing parties won the remainder.**

But this year’s vote, expected in the second half of July, could snap the two main parties’ virtual monopoly on power, veteran politicians say.

Jawhar Nameq Salem, the former head of the KDP’s political office and the first speaker of the regional parliament, a post he held for eight years, said the autonomous regional government will have to rein in factional fighting.

“The two main parties are the ones which will resort to violence because they will lose a lot,” he said. “I expect to see brave new faces.”

The Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq, which supervised the country’s provincial council elections in January, will oversee the vote and has certified 41 political entities, with one final application pending.

Those registered include a breakaway faction from the PUK, the “Change” list led by Talabani’s former deputy Nushirwan Mustafa. His is a rare challenge to the decades-old political powerhouse that has alarmed some PUK leaders.

“If they are looking for change then the two principle powers must form a united front. Change must begin from within their ranks,” senior PUK official Saadi Ahmed Bira said.

The PUK will be holding a conference in June to discuss the internal differences, and it has already agreed to run again on a list with the KDP.

On Sunday Talabani said he is confident the “vast majority” of supporters will stay with his party and he hopes the elections will be peaceful.

“The doors should be open to all lists and political entities. Everyone knows there will be intellectual and political conflicts, but I hope the elections can be held in a civilised way,” he told reporters.

Barzani, speaking at the same press conference in the Kurdistan resort of Dukan, downplayed concerns the two parties may lose support.

“We hear from time to time that the two big parties are losing popularity...The ballot box provides the best proof and test of that.”

**The two Islamic parties are anticipating an improved showing in the elections, but are fearful that the two secular parties may lash out at them.**

“I am convinced that the Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union will not win the same percentage they did in 2005,” said Ali Babir, the head of the Islamic Group, which renounced violence in 2003.

“If we did not decide that war would not end our differences the vote of violence would impose itself (on us),” he added. “The Islamic awakening and the religious current is growing and spreading.”

Hiwa Mirza Saber, head of the more moderate Muslim Brotherhood-inspired Islamic Union, shares the grim outlook. “The situation demands caution and alertness by the two principle parties,” he said. “I call on the regional president (Barzani) to personally watch over the elections” (‘Kurdish vote may bring strife as change looms’ 2009, *AFP*, 3 May [http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gvHrE5sJL52rQ6e5\\_6iB70266Aaw](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gvHrE5sJL52rQ6e5_6iB70266Aaw) – Accessed 18 June 2009 – Attachment 21).

David Romano, writing in February 2009 for The Jamestown Foundation’s *Terrorism Focus*, has concluded that Iraqi Kurds view the results of the recent January 2009 provincial elections with concern:

Some ominous signs have appeared for northern Iraq’s Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) following the January 31 nationwide provincial elections. If the elections offer an indicator of the national mood of Iraq, then in this case Iraq’s Arabs seemed to show a growing preference for Iraqi Arab nationalist political parties and a strong central government, a preference at odds with the KRG’s struggle for greater regional autonomy.

The biggest loser in the provincial elections was the Shiite Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) party. The ISCI went from being the hegemonic party in Iraq’s southern provinces to an embarrassing second- or even third-place showing in most southern provinces. Iraq’s Shiite prime minister, Nuri al-Maliki, emerged in turn as the elections’ biggest winner, greatly improving on the weak following his Dawa party attracted in previous elections. Al-Maliki even seems to have attracted significant numbers of votes from outside his Shiite sectarian base by downplaying religious themes in favor of Iraqi nationalist slogans and the promise of security and strong government – issues with appeal to Sunni Arabs, secular voters and even Christian Iraqis. Where he was once regarded by many as an ineffective compromise choice for Iraqi Prime Minister, al-Maliki has now managed to shape his image into that of the strong leader many Iraqis believe they need.

**Iraqi Kurds view these results with concern.** In Iraq’s federal level of government, the ISCI has generally worked closely with the Kurdish parties and shared their goal of a highly decentralized Iraqi federalism, with a weak central government in Baghdad. If the provincial elections indicate what the national-level parliamentary elections will look like when they are held in late 2009, Iraq’s Kurdish parties will need a few more political allies to compensate for the ISCI’s decline. If Arab Iraqi leaders think they can get more votes and support with a platform of Iraqi nationalism and strong central government, as Al-Maliki seems to have done, such political allies may become increasingly hard to find.

... **These developments, combined with Prime Minister al-Maliki's increasingly tense relations with Kurdish leaders, seem to foreshadow a difficult year ahead for Iraqi Kurds and their leaders.** As the security situation in the center and south of Iraq improves, an increasingly confident al-Maliki-led government appears less conciliatory and more aggressive towards Iraqi Kurdistan. According to *The Economist*, "Mr. Barzani is said to have recently told Mr. Maliki to his face: 'You smell like a dictator'" (November 27, 2008). Arab Iraqi voters in turn appear to be rewarding al-Maliki for his assertiveness.

Iraq's Kurds may hope that divisions among the Arab Iraqi political parties remain serious enough to force some of them to maintain Kurdish allies. Failing the emergence of a fractious, weak, and inward-focused political scene in Baghdad, Iraqi Kurds risk a difficult time ahead. If the government in Baghdad continues to consolidate, KRG leaders may find few friends in the region (besides the mountains) to turn to in case of political difficulties, especially given the current plans to withdraw U.S. troops within two years (Romano, D. 2009, 'In the Aftermath of Iraq's Provincial Elections, Part One: A Dangerous Year Ahead for Iraqi Kurds', *Terrorism Focus*, vol. 6, iss. 5, The Jamestown Foundations website, 19 February [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single-tf-rss-only/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=34522&cHash=05c62779fd](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single-tf-rss-only/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34522&cHash=05c62779fd) – Accessed 6 July 2009 – Attachment 22).

## **2. What Muslim "fundamentalist" groups/parties are active in al-Sulaimaniyah? How much power do they have?**

The Muslim fundamentalist groups most active in Sulaymaniyah are Ansar al-Islam and the linked organisation, Ansar al-Sunna. According to a February 2009 *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism* report on Ansar al-Sunna, a 2007 internet statement indicated that its leadership had agreed to revert to using the group's former name, Ansar al-Islam ('Ansar al-Sunna' 2009, *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, 6 February – Attachment 23; *Jane's* January 2005 report on Ansar al-Islam restricts this groups area of operation to the Halabja region along Sulaymaniyah's border with Iran: see Binnie, J. 2005, 'Ansar al-Islam', *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, 18 January, p.4 – Attachment 24).

*Jane's* 2009 report on Ansar al-Sunna indicates that the group is opposed to any involvement in the current political system, has no actual representation in the political system, and "is instead developing an alternative state structure which is representative (of key groups) but not democratic or pluralistic in any sense". This report also provides the following information on its activities in northern Iraq and Sulaymaniyah. According to this report "Ansar al-Sunna is the only Sunni insurgent movement to create propaganda materials in both Arabic and Kurdish, potentially to cater to Kurdish members or, perhaps more likely, to communicate threats to the Kurdish community":

Level of threat: Ansar al-Sunna cannot currently overthrow the national government or even create no-go zones capable of repelling coalition of Iraqi government forces, even in the group's areas of strength. Nevertheless, it is a large and sophisticated insurgent group, on a par with other major Sunni Islamist-nationalist factions such as the Islamic Army in Iraq (IAI; Al-Jaish al-Islami fi il-Iraq). **The group claims to have undertaken over 1,600 attacks in Iraq, mostly against Iraqi security forces and Shia or Kurdish targets.** As a result, it ranks as a top-tier Sunni insurgent group, particularly in northern areas such as Mosul and Kirkuk.

...Date of founding: Ansar al-Sunna officially declared its formation in an Internet statement on 20 September 2003.

Group type: Militant Islamist. Ansar al-Sunna is a Salafist jihadist terrorist/insurgent movement, composed of transnational Arab jihadists and Iraqi Sunni Arabs, held together by a blend of Salafist doctrine, Iraqi Arab nationalism financial largesse and propaganda.

Aims and objectives: The group's aims and objectives can be divided into two intertwined sets; religious and political-military. The key religious aim and objective of Ansar al-Sunna members is to perform their religious duty by undertaking the lesser jihad by fighting to eject infidel forces from Iraq. Fighters seek the cessation of multinational (particularly US and Iranian) military and intelligence presence in Iraq. Even if this process is ultimately doomed to fail, or indeed if the foreign forces would leave of their own accord, there is a perceived religious imperative to undertake this moral duty. The key political-military aim and objective of Ansar al-Sunna is the establishment of a Sunni-dominated Sharia state. The group has forbidden participation in elections, amnesties or truces involving the purportedly foreign-installed "apostate" Iraqi government, stating: "We will fight you more fiercely than we fight the Americans".

**...Due to the group's connection with northern Iraq and its mixed Arab and Kurdish membership, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Turkish diplomats and contractors have been intensively targeted.**

...Area of operation

Ansar al-Sunna has undertaken operations in almost all areas of Baghdad and the areas north and west of the city (the Sunni Arab heartland). Aside from sporadic strikes on Shia shrines south of the city and in the "triangle of death" areas near Yusufiyah, the group has not operated in southern Iraq. This indicates that Ansar al-Sunna tends to fight where its members live, rather than undertake long-range expeditionary operations.

Ansar al-Sunna regional emirs were established in the following areas in 2004: Mosul, Baghdad, Kirkuk, Bayji, Baqubah, western Anbar (Qaim), eastern Anbar (Ramadi), Fallujah, Yusufiyah, Bezayiz. **The Mosul and Kirkuk areas of northern Iraq have been used as staging grounds for attacks in Arbil and Sulaymaniyah in the KRG.** Ansar was not as seriously affected as AQI by the loss of bases in Fallujah, Ramadi and throughout Anbar after 2005. It has also not been affected as seriously as AQI by the suppression and co-option of Sunni insurgents in Baghdad since 2006.

...The organisation has tended to act boldly (attacks on diplomatic facilities, stunning single-incident death tolls of American troops, repeated hostage-taking, mass beheadings) but has often made comparatively limited media use of their events. **Ansar al-Sunna is the only Sunni insurgent movement to create propaganda materials in both Arabic and Kurdish, potentially to cater to Kurdish members or, perhaps more likely, to communicate threats to the Kurdish community.**

...The current leader of Ansar al-Sunna cannot be ascertained, although Iraqi authorities described Tha'ir Kadhim Sraawi, detained in January 2009, as being the head of the group. The last national-level emir identified by the group was Abu Abdullah al-Hassan bin Mahmud. Media reports indicate that he is an Arab who formerly operated under the banner of Ansar al-Islam.

**...From the outset, the group has been linked to Ansar al-Islam,** the Arab-Kurdish Salafist group in northern Iraq that was scattered by Coalition and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) strikes in March 2003. There are many features of Ansar al-Sunna that underpin the connection. Early leadership figures were connected with Ansar al-Islam, and the closeness of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi to Ansar al-Islam would further explain the long-lasting fraternal ties between AQI and Ansar al-Sunna. In the same way in which Ansar al-Islam focused on

northern Iraq and included Kurdish Islamist members as well as Iraqi and non-Iraqi Arabs, **Ansar al-Sunna is a predominately northern network and publishes its propaganda materials in both Arabic and Kurdish.** The opening high-profile strikes undertaken by Ansar al-Sunna were against Ansar al-Islam's old enemies; the Turkish government and PUK.

...2004

On 1 February, Ansar al-Sunna claimed responsibility for the multiple simultaneous suicide car bombings of Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and PUK offices in Erbil during Eid celebrations. Crowds were targeted, and 109 civilians were killed. On the same day, the group released its manifesto warning Muslim communities to ready themselves to adopt Islamic law (Sharia).

On 9 March, Ansar al-Sunna launched Katyusha rockets at Erbil airport.

...2009

On 11 January, Iraqi authorities announced the arrest of Tha'ir Kadhim Sraawi, the alleged head of the group.

On 3 February, Iraqi security forces announced the arrest of an alleged female member of Ansar al-Sunna, who the authorities suspect was responsible for training around 80 female suicide bombers and sending at least 28 to carry out attacks. She had been detained on an unspecified date two weeks earlier ('Ansar al-Sunna' 2009, *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, 6 February – Attachment 23).

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee's April 2009 report *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers* refers to the targeting by Islamic groups of persons in Sulaymaniyah for their "outspoken views and 'un-Islamic' behaviour", along with bomb attacks in Sulaymaniyah in March and May 2008:

Radical Islamic militants, offshoots from Ansar Al-Islam, a home-grown indigenous Kurdish Islamist Movement, that seek to transform Iraq into an Islamic state based on a rigid Salafi ideology, reportedly have a limited presence in the Kurdistan Region, mainly in **Sulaymaniyah Governorate** near the Iraqi-Iranian border. The group was attacked by Coalition and Kurdish forces during the 2003 invasion for reportedly providing a safe haven to AQI. While Ansar Al-Islam (and its offshoot Ansar Al-Sunna) is mainly active in some areas of the Central Governorates, it is also accused of involvement in several (suicide) attacks in the Kurdistan Region in recent years, mainly directed against PUK and KDP officials as well as attacks on border guards on the Iraqi-Iranian border. Ansar Al-Islam at least temporarily cooperated with AQI and both groups are held responsible for a number of attacks in the Region since 2003. Threats from AQI and Ansar Al-Islam have prompted the KRG authorities to implement increased security measures, including by constructing a tunnel and security barricades segregating Erbil from Kirkuk and Ninewa Governorates and the deployment of 1,000 Peshmerga soldiers to the border with Iran in an attempt to stop possible infiltrations. Nevertheless militant groups continued to have limited abilities to launch attacks in 2008, including on 14 May 2008, when a bomb exploded at a sports ground in the town of **Raniya in Sulaymaniyah Governorate**, seriously injuring three children who were playing football. On 10 March 2008, a suicide car bomber blew himself up outside the luxury Palace Hotel, owned by the PUK, in **Sulaymaniyah City**, killing one person and wounding 30 people, including the city's security chief, Hassan Nouri. At the end of December 2008, the Kurdish authorities announced the arrest of eight alleged Islamic militants with links to Ansar Al-Islam in Sulaymaniyah, who had reportedly confessed their intent to carry out attacks. At the end of December 2008, the Kurdish authorities announced the arrest of eight alleged

Islamic militants with links to Ansar Al-Islam in Sulaymaniyah, who had reportedly confessed their intent to carry out attacks. **Islamist groups are also alleged to target individuals, including for their outspoken views or perceived “un-Islamic” behaviour.** On 1 August 2008, journalist Amanaj Khalil of the weekly Rudaw survived a shooting attack near **Sulaymaniyah**. Reportedly, he had received death threats in relation to an article in which he had written about the links between a Kurdish Islamic organization and the terrorist group Ansar Al-Islam. On 16 December 2007, gunmen blew up a liquor store in the District of Kifri, but no casualties were reported. In February 2007, Houzan Mahmoud, a Kurdish women activist reportedly received death threats by e-mail signed by Ansar Al-Islam (UNHCR 2009, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*, April, pp.132-133 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,...IRQ,,49f569cf2.0.html> – Accessed 23 June 2009 – Attachment 7).

A report on the liquor store attack on the *Aswat Al Iraq* website points out that “Kafri district is on the areas administratively disputed by the provinces of Diala, Kirkuk and al-Sulaimaniya. It lies 118 km northeast of Baaquba, the capital of Diala, 120 km southwest of Kirkuk, and 185 km southwest of Sulaimaniya” (‘Gunmen detonate liquor store in Kafri district’ 2007, *Aswat Al Iraq* website, 16 December <http://en.aswataliraq.info/?p=63225> – Accessed 7 July 2009 – Attachment 25).

An August 2008 article on the Reporters without Borders website on the attack against Amanaj Khalil states that the attack occurred in Kani Kardatt, a region to the west of Sulaymaniyah:

Reporters Without Borders condemns a shooting attack on journalist Amanaj Khalil of the weekly Rudaw on 1 August in Kani Kardatt, a region to the west of Sulaymaniyah in Iraqi Kurdistan. Khalil, who was not injured, had reportedly been getting threats because of one of his articles.

“This attempt to murder Khalil should be taken seriously by the authorities in Kurdistan,” Reporters Without Borders said. “The death threats he had received show that it was linked to his work as a journalist. Measures must be taken to protect him and other journalists who have been threatened.”

Khalil was at the wheel of his car when gunmen aboard a black Opel opened fire on him and then fled. **Khalil said he had received phone calls from a radical Islamic group threatening to kill him – apparently because of an article about the links between a Kurdish Islamic organisation and the group Ansar el Islam.**

Souran Mama Hama of the magazine *Leven* was gunned down by four men in a car outside this home in Iraqi Kurdistan on 21 July after getting death threats. Other journalists who have received threats include Souran Omar, the publisher of the magazine *Rega*, Nehad Jami and Kursat Abd El Rahman (‘Call for protective measures after shooting attack on reporter in Kurdistan’ 2008, Reporters without Borders website, 5 August [http://arabia.reporters-sans-frontieres.org/article.php3?id\\_article=28067](http://arabia.reporters-sans-frontieres.org/article.php3?id_article=28067) – Accessed 23 June 2009 – Attachment 26).

In June 2008, *BBC Monitoring* noted Sbay media’s reporting on the death of two members of Ansar al-Islam in eastern Sulaymaniyah during a failed bomb attempt:

Two members of Ansar al-Islam (reportedly operating in northern Iraq) have been killed while trying to plant a bomb in Penjiwin area, eastern Sulaymaniyah Governorate, Wisha Company’s Sbay website reported on 26 June.

Sbay reported that two members of Ansar al-Islam were killed, at 0200 gmt on 26 June, when the bomb they were trying to plant exploded. It added that one of the bombers was holding an Iranian identity card.

“The two men, who were members of Ansar al-Islam armed group, were killed when the bomb they were trying to plant to hit the Border Guard’s Forces en route to Siyagwez and Gole exploded,” the website quoted a police source as saying (‘Islamist gunman killed in Iraqi Kurdistan reportedly held Iranian ID card’ 2008, *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, source: Sbay media website, 26 June – Attachment 27).

### **The Kurdistan Brigades:**

Another group whose militant activities in Kurdistan are often associated with Ansar al-Islam is the Kurdistan Brigades. In June 2007 Lydia Khalil, in a report for The Jamestown Foundation’s *Terrorism Monitor* stated that: “With the recent increase in insurgency activity in the Kurdish areas, Ansar al-Islam has reemerged as an organized force, likely as part of a new arm of al-Qaeda, the Kurdistan Brigades”, and indicated an extension in its area of operations:

...Ansar al-Islam has extended its operations outside of traditionally PUK controlled areas along the Iranian border into the heart of Kurdish territory in Irbil. According to PUK sources, an Ansar al-Islam squad appeared in the city of Taqtaq in Irbil before the attack on the Ministry of Interior on May 9. A shepherd spotted the strangers moving between the villages of Homar Gomt and Smaqah (PUKMedia, May 11). It is possible that Ansar al-Islam elements were responsible for the Kurdistan Brigades attack. According to Sulaymaniyah’s new security director, al-Qaeda appoints an amir to all of their areas of operation. The amir of Sulaymaniyah, Irbil and Dohuk is a man by the name of Swara who was first a member of the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan and then of Ansar al-Islam, like many of his counterparts (Awene, May 15). Ansar al-Islam has also conducted sophisticated attacks against KRG border guards. In April, they planted a roadside bomb and detonated it via remote control. Insurgents opened fire after the initial blast (Kurdsat TV, April 15). Kurdish authorities have become extremely concerned about insurgent infiltration along the Iranian border and have closed six checkpoints (Hawlati, April 27). Prior to the April attack, Ansar al-Islam forces ambushed a customs check point and a cell phone tower in the city of Bashmagh. The insurgents were wearing traditional Kurdish garb and attacked with light and heavy weapons (Khalil, L. 2007 ‘The Hidden Hand of Iran in the Resurgence of Ansar al-Islam’, *Terrorism Monitor*, vol.: 5, iss. 11, The JamesTown Foundation website, 7 June [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=4213&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=182&no\\_cache=1](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4213&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=182&no_cache=1) – Accessed 18 June 2009 – Attachment 28).

In November 2008, *BBC Monitoring Middle East* reported on an *Al-Arabiya* television program on the Kurdistan Brigades, a group active in the same eastern region of Sulaymaniyah as Ansar al-Islam. The report provides evidence that the Brigades may use the issue of honour as part of a forced recruitment strategy:

The correspondent adds: “Experts cast doubt on the ability of the Kurdistan Brigades to extend their influence to other areas of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, without denying that they were able to penetrate some of these areas. The organization has all means available, to the extent that the brigades were able to transport explosives and weapons to their footholds in a number of the Iraqi Kurdistan cities. **The Brigades intelligence does not spare any effort to entrap and recruit people, utilizing the sensitive issue of honour to do so. This is because the Kurdish society is tribal and gives very high consideration to inherited traditions, particularly the honour issue. Conservative Kurdish families consider honour more**

**important than life itself.” The report runs a clip taken secretly by the Brigades intelligence of a young couple in a love scene in order to threaten and force them to become members of the organization.**

...The programme then introduces Marwan Naqshabandi, researcher in the affairs of armed organizations, saying that the area in which armed groups are located is an Iranian area adjacent to the Iraqi Kurdistan border, in a place called Penjawin, which is part of Al-Sulaymaniyah Governorate, adding that “on the two sides of the border, there are remote villages and places, which were considered as no-man’s-land during the Iraqi-Iranian war of 1980-1988. Thus, the Iranians could easily support or shelter armed groups, particularly the Kurdistan Brigades, in that rough area” (‘Al-Arabiya TV reports on Al-Qa’idah’s activities in Iraqi Kurdistan’ 2008, *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, source: *Al-Arabiya Television*, 23 November – Attachment 29).

A report on the Kurdistan Brigades by Rafid Fadhi Ali, published 25 November 2008 for the Jamestown Foundation’s *Terrorism Monitor*, refers to the group as the “Kurdish arm of al-Qaeda in Iraq”, and provides background on this group. It describes the content of an October 2008 video representing the group’s activities and intentions, and concludes that “the Brigades are urging the moderate Islamists in Kurdistan to turn violent”:

A spokesman of the Kurdish arm of al-Qaeda in Iraq recently announced the group’s intention to eliminate Iraq’s Kurdish leadership: “To the two Kurdish puppets, Jalal Talabani and Masoud Barzani, I swear by God that we have no mercy or sympathy towards the traitors who sold themselves to the enemies of God. Your throats will be slit.” The challenge from the Kurdistan Brigades came in an October video released by al-Furqan, the media arm of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). The Kurdish-language video shows group members doing military training and chanting in Kurdish while masked men read a statement condemning the top Iraqi Kurdish and Shiite leaders. The statement expresses the group’s opinion that the religion of the Kurdish people is in danger, as Kurdistan is under the control of the United States, the UK and the Jews. Entitled “Eid Gift #4 – The Kurdistan Brigades,” the video contained footage of attacks with small arms and road-side bombs on patrols of the security forces of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) (muslm.net, October 8; paldf.net, October 4).

KRG officials usually refer to the Kurdistan Brigades as a group linked to the Salafi-Jihadi Ansar al-Islam movement, the insurgent group bombed by U.S. forces during the 2003 American invasion. The stance of the Brigades differs from the conclusion reached recently by the exiled leader of Ansar al-Islam, Mullah Fatih Krekar, who said he saw no reason to clash with the ruling parties in Kurdistan at the moment, suggesting patience while waiting for this stage in Iraq’s political evolution to pass (Islam Online, November 5).

...Emergence of the Kurdistan Brigades

In the first half of 2007, the name of the Kurdistan Brigades started to appear in jihadi internet forums. On April 21, 2007, a letter signed by Haji Arif, who claimed to be the leader of the Brigades, was placed on a number of jihadi forums. In his letter Arif declared clearly that his group is part of al-Qaeda and presented his group to the public as a Salafi-Jihadi group:

People of Kurdistan, We promise to carry Allah’s message and keep it pure by not mixing it with any infidel legitimacy such as democracy and secularism... You will see how we will destroy the enemies of Allah and restore dignity for the bearers of Allah’s religion... your brothers in the Kurdistan Brigades will prevent Kurdistan from being a pastureland for the Jews, the Crusaders and their agents (majdah.maktoob.com, April 21, 2007).

Arif went on to condemn the Kurdish leaders, Masoud al-Barzani, KRG president, and Jalal

al-Talabani, the president of Iraq. **Arif called on the moderate Islamists in Kurdistan, some of whom are involved in the parliament and the regional government, to change their course:**

Our demands are for those movements that carry Islamic slogans but are aligned with the secular parties and are part of the so-called regional government of Kurdistan... they are not ashamed of sitting with the American occupiers as if they have no relation with the war between America and Islam, as if jihad does not include them. We tell them, leave the Americans and their agents and refer to the Quran verses about belief and infidelity.

Arif ends his statement by calling on Muslims everywhere to support his group with funding. Arif also confirmed his group's loyalty to al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden and to the leader of the Islamic State in Iraq, Shaykh Abu Omar al-Baghdadi.

The vast majority of the population in Iraqi Kurdistan is Sunni Muslim. Nevertheless, AQI could not operate freely in that area in post-war Iraq.

**...The Kurdistan Brigades are active in the border sector between Iraq and Iran, especially around the town of Halabja. This area east of al-Sulaymaniyah is traditionally the main stronghold of the Kurdish Islamists. It was the gateway for the first group of al-Qaeda fighters who came from Afghanistan and set up their camps there. One of those fighters was the then little known Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the late leader of AQI, killed in 2006.**

...The Arab and Kurdish branches of al-Qaeda in Iraq will likely work to bridge the geographical gap between them. Full coordination between the regional government of Kurdistan and the Iraqi central government will be required to prevent this. There was a big row recently when Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki wanted to form tribal armed groups backed by the central government in Kurdistan and the surrounding areas, with the Kurds strongly condemning the move. Kurds, worrying that the Sunni Arabs might turn against them, have opposed forming Awakening councils in disputed areas where the population is a mix of Kurd and Sunnis Arab (Moheet.com, November 18). If this dispute develops into a crisis, it would present a golden opportunity for al-Qaeda to connect the mountain bases of the Kurdistan Brigades along the Iranian border east of al-Sulaymaniyah with one of the few remaining AQI strongholds west of al-Sulaymaniyah in the Himreen Mountains.

While the Brigades are urging the moderate Islamists in Kurdistan to turn violent, moderate Kurdish Islamists must try to influence the members of the Brigades, especially those whom they knew and worked with in the past. Both the central and regional governments should support such initiatives in an effort to curb the spread of radical Islam in the relatively secure Iraqi Kurdistan (Fadhil Ali, R. 2008, 'Kurdish Islamist Groups in Northern Iraq', *Terrorism Monitor*, vol.6, iss. 22, The Jamestown Foundation website, 25 November [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=34176](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34176) – Accessed 7 July 2009 – Attachment 30).

### **Fundamentalist Muslim political parties in Kurdistan:**

Rafid Fadhi Ali's November 2008 report on the Brigades for the Jamestown Foundation's *Terrorism Monitor* also refers to the Islamic political parties participating in regional government and parliaments. According to Ali, the Islamic Group of Kurdistan does not currently "advocate jihad":

- The Islamic Movement in Iraqi Kurdistan (IMIK) – Formed in 1987 in Halabja. IMIK fought against Saddam's regime in the 1980s. In the 1990s IMIK engaged in fighting with

Jalal al-Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The movement is led by Mullah Ali Abd al-Aziz Halabji. In its last conference IMIK announced reforms and elected women for the first time to its supreme command. A pledge was also made to play the role of the political opposition in Kurdistan.

- The Islamic Group of Kurdistan (IGK) – Headed by Mullah Ali Bapir, the IGK formed in 2001 as an offshoot of the IMIK. The movement participates in the regional government and parliament. The group does not currently advocate jihad and has announced its willingness to work with Sufi as well as Salafist forms of Sunni Islam.
- The Islamic Union of Kurdistan (IUK) – Unlike the Salafist IMIK and the IGK, this group, which is the biggest Islamic party in Kurdistan, represents the Muslim Brotherhood in Kurdistan. The IUK is headed by Salah al-Din Muhammad Baha'a al-Din and is considered the third party in Kurdistan, with members in both the central and regional parliaments (Fadhil Ali, R. 2008, 'Kurdish Islamist Groups in Northern Iraq', *Terrorism Monitor*, vol.6, iss. 22, The Jamestown Foundation website, 25 November [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=34176](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34176) – Accessed 7 July 2009 – Attachment 30)

According to a July 2008 article by Mamand Rozhe for the magazine *Levin* (Sulaymaniyah) and reported on by *BBC Monitoring*, the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) is regarded as a centrist party, and the Kurdistan Islamic Group (Komal) is a party that “still holds extremist views”:

“The Islamic Movement of Kurdistan, the third largest party in the 1990s, retreated after it failed in the battle for power with the nationalist parties. It later scattered into different groups and failed to maintain its balance in Kurdistan's political ground.”

The Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) is regarded as a centrist party. “The KIU did not enter into the armed conflict. However, the internal armed conflicts in the early 1990s helped the KIU to grow. But the party's growth died down a lot when the PUK and the KDP ended fighting and reached an agreement.” He added that, as the armed Islamic parties had failed to settle the disputes by fighting, the interest in an Islamic moderate approach increased.

In recent years, the Kurdistan Islamic Group (Komal) returned to the political struggle. Although the party still holds extremist views, it is trying to find a place in the political process, he said.

The oppositions

Rozhe said: “The political struggle in Iraqi Kurdistan has found a different direction. Liberal standpoints in the region are taking shape. The free media created a stage for the political struggle in the region,” adding that the KIU, the Kurdistan Islamic Group, the Kurdistan Toilers' Party and the Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party (KSDP) – the four-party alliance – was an example that showed that Kurdistan Region was entering a new era (‘Iraqi Kurdish magazine reflects on tension between political parties’ 2008, *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, source: Mamand Rozhe, *Levin*, Sulaymaniyah, 28 July – Attachment 31).

In October 2007, the *Voice of America* website reported that the “Islamic Union of Kurdistan, advocates an Islamic state and is growing in popularity...[is] the most popular alternative to the ruling parties [KDP and PUK]...has no militia, only a local television station to present its vision of a moderate, Islamic democracy” (Padden, B. 2007, ‘Islamic Party in Kurdish Iraq Growing in Popularity, Voice of America News website, 19 October <http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2007-10/2007-10-19->

[voa48.cfm?CFID=248190638&CFTOKEN=68821677&jsessionid=de30773e432476e2d6404068a74194949737](http://voa48.cfm?CFID=248190638&CFTOKEN=68821677&jsessionid=de30773e432476e2d6404068a74194949737) – Accessed 30 June 2009 – Attachment 32).

A number of news articles were also found, published between 2007 and 2005, which refer to other activities of Muslim fundamentalist groups in Sulaymaniyah, the attitudes of the general Kurdish population and Islamic political parties to extremist views. Following the truck bombs attacks in Erbil and Makmour in May 2007, the *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* website indicated that “local residents told newspapers that the militants had threatened non-Muslims. Leaflets circulated in towns inside Al-Sulaymaniyah Governorate said the militants are “hunting down those who have converted” to Zoroastrianism and Christianity” (Ridolfo, K. 2007, ‘Iraq: Kurdish Region under Increasing Threat’, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty website, 16 May <http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1076522.html> – Accessed 23 June 2009 – Attachment 33).

A July 2006 article by James Brandon for *The Christian Science Monitor* reported that Mohammed Ahmed, a member of parliament for the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), had called for a greater role for Islamic law or sharia, and that “the demands for Islamic law reflect the growing popularity of Islamic parties like the KIU and its smaller, more radical rival Komala, which was once allied with the Al-Qaeda’s Kurdish offshoot Ansar Al-Islam. While unlikely to change the political power balance in Kurdistan any time soon, the Islamic parties may cultivate the ground for more radical ideas to take root” (Brandon, J. 2006, ‘Pro-US Kurds eye nascent Islamic parties’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 6 July <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0706/p07s02-woiq.html> – Accessed 1 July 2009 – Attachment 34).

Following the November 2005 arrest of six groups of extremists in Erbil, another report by *The Christian Science Monitor* quoted the PUK Islamist expert as stating that “There are some small, hidden signs of their [extremists] presence in Kurdistan, but they are not easily recognizable, and work under the umbrella of [legal] Islamic parties... We have our own agents among these groups, trained to infiltrate. They are under constant watch” (Peterson, S. 2005 ‘Rumbles of radicalism in Kurdistan’ *The Christian Science Monitor*, 3 November <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/1103/p04s02-woiq.html> – Accessed 18 June 2009 – Attachment 35).

### **3. How common is the incidence (if any) of individuals being killed in al-Sulaimanyeh because of breaches of social mores, excluding “honour killing”? How do the authorities deal with perpetrators?**

A number of reports were found attesting to the liberal attitudes held within Sulaymaniyah city relative to the rest of Iraq (Ryder, R. 2007 ‘Women losing political freedom in new Iraq, says Iraqi living in P.E.I’, *The Guardian Prince Edward Island* website, 23 March <http://www.theguardian.pe.ca/index.cfm?sid=18574&sc=98> – Accessed 22 June 2009 – Attachment 36; Burkholder, R. 2004, ‘Gallup Poll of Iraq: What Prospect for Women’s Rights?’, Gallup.com website, 20 July <http://www.gallup.com/poll/12409/gallup-poll-iraq-what-prospect-womens-rights.aspx> – Accessed 23 June 2009 – Attachment 37).

In a recent chat-forum on the Lonely Planet website, the author of the Iraq guide in the *Lonely Planet Middle East* stated that:

Regarding women: Check out Sulaymaniyah. The city's attitudes towards women are much more liberal. The only women I saw "covered" in Sulay were older senior citizens. Young women in Sulay were much more keen to chatting with foreign visitors ('Iraq – Some Thoughts, Info from a Recent Trip' 2009, Travel information forum: Lonely Planet website, 2 June <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree/thread.jspa?threadID=1779513> – Accessed 22 June 2009 – Attachment 38).

Sulaymaniyah is described as "the most liberal city in Iraq" in a February 2006 interview with an Iraqi documentary maker on the GreenCine website. The report qualifies this judgement, however, with regard to women:

There's a big division between the genders socially. I found that the easiest way and the fastest, most efficient way to get inside the culture was, (a) through the eyes of a child and (b) through the eyes of a man. In Iraq I tried a number of times to hire women translators to work with me so that I would be able to have female main characters in the film and I was unsuccessful. One woman I spoke with said, "Look, I'd be very happy to work with you, but my family would object and I could work with you in this city," where she was, "but I wouldn't be able to travel with you, and I certainly couldn't spend the night outside with some man."

So there are these considerations that are just there and in the culture. That was in the more liberal part of Iraq, which is the Kurdish region up north in Sulaymaniyah, which is the most liberal city in Iraq. Women go uncovered and you can buy alcohol in stores right on the street; there are bars, it's the most liberal place, and still, it was impossible for her to have this working relationship, even there. In Baghdad it was much worse, and in the south, while I was in Nasiriyah and Najaf, you know, I can't recall even ever having a conversation with a woman (Eaves, H. 2006 'From Gaza to Iraq: James Longley', GreenCine website, 2 February <http://www.greencine.com/article?action=view&articleID=270> – Accessed 22 June 2009 – Attachment 39).

No information was found in the sources consulted on how common is the incidence of individuals being killed in Sulaymaniyah because of breaches of social mores, outside of honour killing. Major reports on human rights in Iraq do refer to the targeting of persons accused of "un-Islamic" behaviour, citing reports from areas under the control of Sunni and Shi'ite extremist groups or where such groups have a continued presence, without any references to Sulaymaniyah (UNHCR 2009, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*, April, pp.191-193 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,,IRQ,,49f569cf2,0.html> – Accessed 23 June 2009 – Attachment 7; Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD) 2007, *Country Report Iraq. 11th European Country of Origin Information Seminar (Vienna, 21-22 June 2007)*, UNHCR website, November, pp.92-93 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country.COI.ACCORD,,IRQ,,474ed53c2,0.html> – Accessed 23 June 2009 – Attachment 40).

Little information was found on how the authorities might deal with those who perpetrate crimes against someone who breaks social mores. The May 2009 UK Home Office Country of Origin Information Report, *Kurdistan Regional Government Area of Iraq*, collates a number reports on the functioning of the KRG police (at para. 9.19) and Judiciary (from 10.01). At paragraph 9.16 the report quotes the International Committee of the Red Cross in Erbil which stated that "KR was policed strongly, driven by the need to combat terrorist activities, which had resulted in a high level of security...The KRG security apparatus was sophisticated and law enforcement agencies were generally well trained and equipped. The

public enjoyed the high level of day-to-day security”. Other reports collated indicate that while well administered the police were not independent of the main political parties, the KDP and the PUK. Similar problems with political affiliation and independence from the executive existed for the judiciary in the KRG, alongside “a lack of professional expertise amongst practitioners and a complex and inefficient bureaucracy” (UK Home Office 2009, *Kurdistan Regional Government Area of Iraq*, 21 May, pp.38- 39, 45 <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/iraq-kurdistan-220509.doc> – Accessed 22 June 2009 – Attachment 6).

A February 2009 report on violence against women and honour-related violence in Sulaymaniyah may be of interest, as it provides the following information on how authorities and the justice system are dealing with those who commit honour crimes and related violence against women:

In July 2007, the KRG authorities established a Directorate to Follow-up Violence against Women within the Interior Ministry in Sulaimaniya. Later this same year a department was opened in Erbil. These offices had registered some 190 cases by December 2007. Offices now exist in Duhok and Garmian. These departments are mandated to receive cases of violence against women and direct and monitor progress of investigations. The departments also monitor occurrences and patterns of unnatural deaths of women and other forms of violence and produce statistical data and reports on the situation of women in the region.

According to a Sulaimaniya Directorate official, since July 2007 542 cases of violence against women have been “followed up” in the Sulaimaniya and Garmian offices alone.

...According to the UNAMI Human Rights Office, those convicted of honor-related killings in the Kurdistan Region were generally charged with premeditated murder under article 406 of the Iraqi Penal Code. In 2002, the Kurdistan National Assembly promulgated legislation authorizing criminal courts to “disregard” Iraqi legislation allowing the imposition of reduced sentences for killings committed in the name of defending honor. However, UNAMI has observed that this is not consistently implemented in practice, illustrating that between 2000 and 2007 in Duhok Governorate, only ten persons were convicted, of whom five received sentences of 15 years’ imprisonment. In one case, a man received a two-year sentence in 2007 for killing his wife, while the remainder received custodial sentences ranging between five and ten years for killing their female relatives. The KNA also passed a decision in March 2007 to exclude honor crimes from the General Amnesty Law. This revoked immunity against prosecution for members of the security forces such as the Peshmerga accused of honorrelated crimes, subjecting them to arrest and investigation. A state has a positive obligation under international human rights law and genderspecific legal documents to protect a woman against honor-related violence. (pp.12-13).

...Honor-related violence represents one type of violence against women that occurs in Iraq and is by no means peculiar to Iraqi Kurdistan. According to UNAMI, honor crimes were perpetrated with regularity in Basra and Basra police had documented that of the women killed in 2007 had gun-shot wounds with some bearing signs of severe abuse suggesting honor-related motivations. **However, what distinguishes the violence in Basra from that of the Kurdistan Region is that the crimes in Basra were not necessarily committed by the victim’s family or the community, but by self-styled Islamic vigilante groups trying to impose their radically conservative views on what constitutes acceptable social behavior on the population in Basra. Violent crimes against women dropped markedly when a military crackdown by the central government drove these groups underground in the spring of 2008.**

Kurdish society has been moving towards modernization in some realms, however, it continues to grip onto patriarchal influenced. Unequal power relations where women are regulated by a complex network of mutually constituted practices that reinforce the idea that women are by nature subordinate to men. These include moral social regulations as well as women's rights in divorce, marriage, inheritance, and custody.(p.16)

### **... Dishonorable Conduct**

As to what constitutes dishonorable conduct, it is clear that the vast majority of those interviewed associated dishonorable conduct with “unacceptable” behavior by females along lines of morality and societal norms. **There were some respondents who made a point of including bad behavior by males as well;** however, generally, it is evident that dishonorable conduct is a construct reserved for women (p.20)

### **Perpetrator Going Free**

Many of those who contributed to this project by recounting cases of honor-related crimes emphasised that suspects usually evade accountability and justice. This is viewed as a consequence of the strength and influence of the informal justice processes and the corresponding weakness of the formal justice system (p.30) (Taysi, T.B. 2009, *Eliminating Violence against Women: Perspectives on Honour-Related Violence, in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, Sulaimaniya Governorate*, UNHCR website, February – Attachment 41).

In a report published in April 2009, Amnesty International (AI) examined in detail the present situation of human rights in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, especially violations committed by the security forces. The report documents cases of arbitrary detention by the authorities of persons for their “suspected membership of or support for armed Islamist groups, in particular Ansar al-Islam...as well as legal political parties including the Kurdistan Islamic Movement and *al-Jama'a al Islamiya* (the Islamic Group)...who were members of these organizations at the time of their arrest...[or] had ceased their involvement” (p.11); as well as the “widespread pattern of arrests and prolonged detention without charge or trial of Islamists” (p.13) This report may suggest that the Kurdistan authorities would be highly suspicious of persons suspected of committing crimes related to social mores and which may be motivated in some way Muslim fundamentalist or Islamist ideas and/or groups such as Ansar al-Islam (Amnesty International 2009, *Hope and fear: Human rights in the Kurdistan region of Iraq*, UNHCR website, 14 April – Attachment 42).

Chapter eight of this AI report examines discrimination and violence against women, and the prosecution of perpetrators of honour crimes and related violence (p.38) (Amnesty International 2009, *Hope and fear: Human rights in the Kurdistan region of Iraq*, UNHCR website, 14 April – Attachment 42).

### **4. For a young single man from this area, what barriers are there to resettlement away from one's home city, but within the Kurdish north?**

The April 2009 *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers* states that persons originating from within the three Kurdish Northern Governorates can enter the other governorates of Dahuk and Erbil “without any restrictions”. Admission into Sulaymaniyah is generally not restricted for such persons, the exception being the District of Kalar in this case (UNHCR 2009, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*, April, pp.53-54 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,...IRQ,,49f569cf2,0.html> – Accessed 23

June 2009 – Attachment 7). The report also has the following detailed information on “IFA/IRA [Internal flight or relocation alternative] within the three Northern Governorates for Iraqis who originate from these Governorates”:

Despite the formal unification of the formerly separate administrations (PUK administration in the Governorate of Sulaymaniyah and KDP administration in the Governorates of Dahuk and Erbil) since 21 January 2006 and the establishment of a joint Kurdish government and parliament, the two areas still remain largely under de facto control of the respective ruling parties, which monopolize power with limited accountability.

137. Persons fleeing persecution at the hands of the KRG or the ruling parties will generally not be able to find protection in another part of the Kurdistan Region. [212] Persons fleeing persecution at the hands of non-state actors (e.g. family/tribe in the case of fear from “honour killing” or blood feud) may still be within reach of their persecutors. The same applies for persons fearing persecution by Islamist groups. Mainly single women and female heads of household may also face difficulties to access employment and provide for their living without family/community support network.

[212] Persons may face difficulties to reach the other area as despite the (partial) unification of the two administrations as there continue to be a total of six checkpoints on the former border between the KDP and the PUK-dominated areas. Furthermore, the authorities in Erbil/Dahuk, for political reasons, would likely not be willing to provide protection to persons that have openly criticized the authorities or the PUK in Sulaymaniyah and vice versa (UNHCR 2009, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*, April, pp.60-61 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,,IRQ,,49f569cf2,0.html> – Accessed 23 June 2009 – Attachment 7).

On matters of a practical nature with regard to relocation, this report also states that: “Access to employment may also prove difficult for persons with no family, tribal or political connections in the Kurdistan Region. Access to employment, in particular in the public sector, often requires tribal links or affiliation with the KDP or the PUK, respectively”, (p.57) and that:

134. While the larger cities in the Region of Kurdistan generally have a mixed population that allows persons of other ethnic, religious or tribal affiliation to integrate, relocation to more rural or homogenous areas is more difficult, as the person might be exposed to a serious risk of rejection by the community, which could result in physical insecurity and/or undue hardship. Arabs are also often met with suspicion by the Kurdish authorities and population for perceived links to the former regime and/or the ongoing insurgency (UNHCR 2009, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*, April, pp.59 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,,IRQ,,49f569cf2,0.html> – Accessed 23 June 2009 – Attachment 7).

The September 2007 UN High Commissioner for Refugees Governorate Assessment Report for Sulaymaniyah indicated that “Freedom of movement within Sulaymaniyah and between neighbouring Governorates is generally uninhibited and there are no curfews in place.... persons originating from outside the Kurdistan region have to inform the authorities if they intend to change their location”. This report provides the following further details:

Travellers are asked to show an identification document (e.g. Civil ID Card) as part of routine security checks. This can restrict the movement of returnees and IDPs who may not have

appropriate Iraqi documentation. Returnees who have not yet renewed their identity cards are required to obtain a letter from the local security office in their area before travelling outside the district or between Governorates. It has been reported that some women face restrictions on their freedom of movement by their families because of social customs/traditions. However, during 2007, some measures were implemented at the boundary between Erbil and Sulaymaniyah Governorates, according to which all passengers and drivers using public transportation between sunset and sunrise have to register their names at the border checkpoint for reasons of security (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2007, 'Governorate Assessment Report Sulaymaniyah Governorate', UNHCR website, September, p.20 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/471f4c9c27.html> – Accessed 17 June 2009 – Attachment 13).

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UK Home Office website [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/)

#### **United Nations (UN)**

United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq website <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/>

UNHCR website <http://www.unhcr.org/>

#### **Non-Government Organisations**

Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) website <http://www.csis.org/>

The Jamestown Foundation website <http://www.jamestown.org/>

#### **International News & Politics**

*BBC News* <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

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KurdishMedia.com website <http://www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=11601>

Sulaimaniyah Government website [http://www.sulygov.com/en\\_index.asp](http://www.sulygov.com/en_index.asp)

*Times of Kurdistan* <http://www.timesofkurdistan.com/index.php>

*Asharq Al-Awsat* <http://www.aawsat.com/>

#### **Topic Specific Links**

Reporters without Borders website <http://arabia.reporters-sans-frontieres.org/>

#### **Search Engines**

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

#### **Online Subscription Services**

#### **Library Networks**

#### **University Sites**

### Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

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