Home Office

Country Information and Guidance

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

April 2015

Preface

This document provides guidance to Home Office decision makers on handling claims made by nationals/residents of – as well as country of origin information (COI) about – Iraq, specifically if claims are likely to justify humanitarian protection 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 e-mail us.

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. 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/

It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy.

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Section 1: Guidance

Date Updated: April 2015

1.1 Basis of Claim

1.1.1 That the security situation in areas controlled by the government of Iraq, including areas under the Kurdistan regional government, 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'), which applies where there is a serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict.

1.1.2 An assessment of protection needs under Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive (QD) should only take place if the person is unable to establish a need for refugee protection. Consideration of Article 15(c) is part of the consideration of whether the applicant is entitled to humanitarian protection or humanitarian protection under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

1.1.3 This document considers the security situation in the following governorates under, as of April 2015, the control of the government of Iraq (GoI), including the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG): Baghdad (including Baghdad city) Babil, Basrah, Kerbala, Najaf, Muthanna, Thi-Qar, Missan, Quadissiya and Wassit, and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) which comprises Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dahuk governorates.

1.1.4 The GoI and KRG forces, supported by the US-coalition forces, are contesting areas occupied by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and have regained control of a number of towns / areas in the governorates of Anbar, Salah Addin, Diyala, At Ta'min (Kirkuk) and Ninewa over the course of 2014 and early 2015. However the security situation and areas of control remain fluid and decision makers should consider the latest available country information in determining which areas are under the control of or being contested by the GoI and allied forces.

See country information for sources providing information on which areas are controlled by the GoI and ISIL, and Country Information and Guidance: Iraq: The security situation in the 'contested' areas of Iraq, August 2014

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1.2 Summary of Issues

- Is the person's account a credible one?
- Is the person from or returnable to Baghdad governorate, Babil governorate, a governorate in the south or the KRI?
- Is there an international or internal armed conflict in Iraq?
- Is there indiscriminate violence in areas under the control of the Iraq government, including areas under the Kurdish regional government, which is at such a level that substantial grounds exist for believing that the person, solely by being present there, faces a real risk of harm which threatens their life or person?
- Are those at risk able to internally relocate?

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1.3 Consideration of Issues

Is a person's account credible?

1.3.1 Decision makers must also consider whether the material facts relating to the person's experiences in Iraq are reasonably detailed, internally consistent (e.g. oral testimony, written statements) as well as being externally credible (i.e. consistent with generally known facts and the country information). Decision makers should take into account the possible underlying factors as to why a person may be inconsistent or unable to provide details of material facts.

See also the Asylum Instruction: Assessing credibility and refugee status

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Is the person from or returnable to Baghdad governorate, Babil governorate, a governorate in the south or the KRI?

1.3.2 Decision makers should establish where the person originates from in Iraq and where they will return as these will be factors relevant to the considering the risk that they will face on return.

Is there an international or internal armed conflict in Iraq?

1.3.3 There currently exists a state of internal armed conflict between ISIL and the GoI and its allies in Iraq, with the violence principally in northern, central and western areas of the country.

1.3.4 A state of civil instability and/or where law and order has sometimes broken down does not of itself give rise to a well-founded fear of persecution for a Refugee Convention reason. The claimant must demonstrate that they have a well-founded fear of persecution on Convention grounds.

1.3.5 In assessing whether the general security situation may breach Article 15(c), the Court of Appeal in QD Iraq v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2009] EWCA Civ620, 24 June 2009, found that whilst there was no need for an internal armed conflict to be 'exceptional' in its nature for 15(c) to be breached, what is required is an intensity of indiscriminate violence - which will self-evidently not characterise every such situation - and which is great enough to meet the test set out in Elgafagi.' (paragraph 36)

See also Asylum Instructions on Assessing credibility and refugee status and, for information on the interpretation of Article 15(c) of the QD, Humanitarian protection

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Is there indiscriminate violence in areas under the control of the Iraq government, including areas under the Kurdish regional government, which is at such a level that substantial grounds exist for believing that the person, solely by being present there, faces a real risk of harm which threatens their life or person?

1.3.6 Article 15(c) of the QD applies only to civilians, who must be genuine non-combatants and not those who are party to the conflict. Civilians include former combatants who have genuinely and permanently renounced armed activity, although consideration must be given to whether any exclusion provisions apply.

1.3.7 In Elgafaji v. Staatssecretaris van Justitie, C-465/07, European Union: European Court of Justice, 17 February 2009 (ECJ case of Elgafaji), the Court held that a serious and individual threat to a person can exceptionally be considered to be established where the degree of indiscriminate violence characterising the armed conflict reaches such a high level that substantial grounds are shown for believing that a civilian, returned to the relevant country or region, would, solely on account of his presence on the territory of that country or region, face a real risk of being subject to that threat. (paragraph 43)

1.3.8 Decision makers should also consider if a person's individual circumstances expose them to an increased risk of indiscriminate violence. In the ECJ case of Elgafaji the Court held that 'the more the [person] is able to show that [they are] specifically affected by

reason of factors particular to [their] personal circumstances, the lower the level of indiscriminate violence required for [them] to be eligible for subsidiary protection'. (paragraph 39)

See also Asylum Instructions on Assessing credibility and refugee status and, for information on the interpretation of Article 15(c) of the QD, Humanitarian protection

Baghdad governorate

1.3.9 Although recent successes by Kurdish, GoI and US-Coalition forces have pushed back ISIL from territories it occupied in mid-2014 and degraded its military capabilities, ISIL remains in control of parts of the country, although not in Baghdad governorate. ISIL continues to perpetrate attacks in Baghdad governorate, with an ultimate goal of securing its so-called 'Caliphate state' in Iraq and Syria.

1.3.10 In September 2014 an inclusive national government was formed and is led by Prime Minister Hadar al Abadi. The government's proposed programme, partly designed to improve relations between relations between Sunni and Shia Arabs, included a number of reforms to address corruption, restructuring the armed forces, reducing marginalisation of Sunni Arabs and human rights violations.

1.3.11 However, despite the government's programme sectarian tensions remain high throughout the country and may have increased as a result of the continuing armed conflict between the GoI and ISIL. Religious sectarianism, particularly between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, is one of the key drivers of violence in Iraq with insurgent groups exploiting long standing Sunni marginalisation to reignite a cycle of violence.

1.3.12 There are a range of armed actors currently operating in Baghdad governorate, including Shiite and Sunni militias, extremist Islamic groups including ISIL, organised criminal gangs as well as Iraqi security forces. However, there are no reports that ISIL, or other Sunni extremist groups, exercise de facto control in any district of Baghdad city or Baghdad governorate.

1.3.13 Most violence is reportedly instigated by unknown perpetrators, therefore identifying actors and trends in violence in Baghdad is difficult. Over 2014 and into 2015 ISIL and affiliated groups launched a campaign of mass-casualty attacks in Baghdad to provoke sectarian discord, usually targeting Shia neighbourhoods, government buildings and security checkpoints, but also included bombings of markets, restaurants, parks and places of worship (mosques / shrines). Such attacks have resulted in high fatalities and a significant number of injuries. While one source indicated that ISIL are mounting fewer attacks following military advances made by the GoI forces and its allies against the group, high casualty attacks continue to occur in Baghdad city. In addition there have been a number of reports of targeted attacks and sectarian reprisals against Sunni Muslims by Shi'a militias, often armed and backed by the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), including execution style killings, kidnappings and forced evictions. A number of the victims' bodies have shown signs of torture, and there have been kidnappings with abductees being killed despite ransoms being paid.

1.3.14 Baghdad governorate, which remains under the control of the GoI and the ISF supported by Shia militias, is statistically the most violent in Iraq (as well as the most populous with around 20% of total population). It has witnessed a significant increase in violence in 2014 and early 2015 as compared to 2012 and to a lesser extent over 2013 based on comparison of Iraqi Body Count (IBC) data for 2012, 2013 and 2014; and UN Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) data for April to December 2013 (the only data UNAMI published for 2013) and the same period in 2014 (as the sources use different methodologies, may include data of non-conflict related deaths / injuries, and are likely to under-report the actual number of casualties, the comparison is only a guide to actual levels of violence).

1.3.15 IBC documented 1,112 civilian fatalities in 2012; 3,077 in 2013; and 4,767 in 2014. While UNAMI reported a total of 3,702 civilian fatalities in 2014 but for April to December 2013 and same period in 2014 it documented similar totals of 2,863 and 2,986 fatalities respectively, with a decline in the number of injured between April and December 2014 (6,762 persons) compared to the same period in 2013 (7,027 persons). UNAMI recorded 8,735 civilians injured in 2014, compared to 11,791 wounded reported by 'Musings on Iraq' during 2014. Both UNAMI and Musings on Iraq document similar levels of civilian casualties continuing into 2015.

1.3.16 Based on a governorate population of around 6.6 million, the number of fatalities and injuries documented by UNAMI in 2014 represented around 0.06% and 0.13% respectively of the total population, making a combined civilian casualty total of approximately 0.18% (around 1 in every 540). Using IBC fatality figures, just over 0.07% of the governorate's population was killed in security-related incidents in 2014. While Musings on Iraq data on the numbers of civilian injured represents approximately 0.18% of the governorate population in 2014. Despite the higher levels of violence, displacement remained low (at around 60,000 persons), with the majority of those displaced (over 40,000) moving within the governorate by early 2015. Over 300,000 persons have been displaced from elsewhere in Iraq to Baghdad governorate as of March 2015.

1.3.17 In the country guidance case of HM and others (Article 15(c)) Iraq CG [2012] UKUT 00409 (IAC), 13 November 2012, the Upper Tribunal (UT) held that the 'evidence does not establish that the degree of indiscriminate violence characterising the current armed conflict taking place in the five central governorates in Iraq, namely Baghdad, Diyala, Tameen (Kirkuk), Ninewah, Salah Al-Din, is at such a high level that substantial grounds have been shown for believing that any civilian returned there would solely on account of his presence there face a real risk of being subject to that threat.' (para 360ii) The UT also held that the 'evidence as a whole [is] insufficient to establish Sunni or Shi'a identity as in itself an "enhanced risk category" under Article 15(c), we do accept that depending on the individual circumstances, and in particular on their facing return to an area where their Sunni or Shi'a brethren are in a minority, a person may be able to establish a real risk of Article 15(c).' (para 297)

1.3.18 The security situation has deteriorated across Iraq and in those areas which are occupied by ISIL or where there is open armed conflict between the government, its allies and ISIL – namely in parts of the governorates of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk (Tameen), Ninewah and Salah Al-din – the guidance in HM in relation to the security situation is superseded by more recent Country Information and Guidance.

See Country Information and Guidance: Iraq: The security situation in the 'contested' areas of Iraq, August 2014

1.3.19 However, while the situation in Baghdad governorate has also deteriorated it has not done so to the degree that there are clear and cogent reasons for departing from the Upper Tribunal's assessment in HM and others that a return to that city or the governorate generally would be a breach of Article 15(c) of the QD. Given the current levels of violence when considered against the size of the population (around 6.6million); the relatively low levels of displacement; the asymmetric nature of the conflict (of bombings / shootings, rather than one of open armed conflict); the targeting of government buildings, security check points and areas (primarily Shia) of Baghdad city; that the Government's armed forces remain generally in control of the city (to the extent that the longstanding curfew was removed in February 2015), the situation has not deteriorated to the extent that substantial grounds exist for believing that any civilian, solely by being present in Baghdad governorate, faces a real risk of harm which threatens their life or person.

1.3.20 While in general a return to Baghdad governorate would not breach Article 15(c), decision makers must consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the person's individual circumstances which might nevertheless place them at risk. Such factors include – but are not limited to - the person's age, gender, health, ethnicity, religious sect, disability, and profession. Some persons, especially those who reside in areas where they are a minority, may face a heightened risk of indiscriminate violence. Decision makers must consider carefully whether the existence of such factors means that the harm they fear is not in fact indiscriminate, but targeted, if not at them personally, for Refugee Convention reasons.

1.3.21 The security situation remains fluid and decision makers must take into account the person's individual circumstances and the latest country information on the levels and nature of violence in assessing if a person is at risk of serious harm.

See Country information, Baghdad

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Babil governorate

1.3.22 There has been a deterioration in the security situation in Babil governorate since 2012 and 2013. In 2014 there was an average of 126 persons killed per month (based on data collated by the blogger Joel Wing), a 68 per cent increase from 2013 figures and a 78 per cent increase from 2012 (based on IBC data – different reporting methodologies may apply, so comparisons should be considered a guide only). Based on these data, which are likely to under-report numbers, the total number of fatalities of 1,507 in 2014 represents just over 0.08% of the population (of around 1.8 million).

1.3.23 The government maintains control over the majority of the governorate, including the northern part of Babil around Jurf Al-Sakhr which was previously an ISIL strong-hold from which it launched attacks on the surrounding area and manufactured car bombs. By the end of 2014 ISIL's presence in Jurf Al-Sakhr had been cleared, with insurgents routed further north. This military success has improved the security situation considerably. However there remained a risk of further violence, both from renewed armed conflict and as a result of IEDs left behind by insurgents.

1.3.24 Displacement data shows just under half of the families displaced from Babil, 664, had relocated elsewhere in the governorate.

1.3.25 While the levels of violence have increased in Babil compared to previous years, conditions have not deteriorated to the extent that a person returning there would face a breach of Article 15(c).

1.3.26 While in general a return to Babil would not breach Article 15(c), decision makers must also consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the person's individual circumstances which might nevertheless place them at risk. Such factors include – but are not limited to - the person's age, gender, health, ethnicity, religious, sect, disability and profession. Some persons, especially those who reside in areas where they are a minority, may face a heightened risk of indiscriminate violence. Decision makers must consider carefully whether the existence of such factors means that the harm that a person fears is not in fact indiscriminate, but targeted, if not at them personally, for Refugee Convention reasons.

1.3.27 The security situation remains fluid and decision makers must take into account the person's individual circumstances and the latest country information on the levels and nature of violence in assessing if a person is at risk of harm.

See: Country information, Babil

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Southern governorates

1.3.28 The southern governorates of Iraq are Basra, Kerbala, Najaf, Muthanna, Thi-Qar, Missan, Quadissiya and Wassit. This territory is predominantly populated by Shia Arabs.

1.3.29 The security situation in southern governorates remained relatively stable in 2014. Thi-Qar and Muthanna recorded the lowest levels of civilian fatalities (with 8 and 6 fatalities recorded in 2014) – Basra and Kerbala the highest levels (with 128 and 200 fatalities respectively for the year) – out of a total population of 6.7 million for the eight governorates. The levels of violence across the eight governorates were considerably lower than for other parts of the country (with the exception of KRI). Whilst the majority of security incidents involved targeted attacks, mass casualty attacks did occasionally occur in the south, notably Basra and Kerbala. The southern governorates also continue to see targeted killings/kidnappings and sectarian reprisal attacks against individuals, including members of political parties, religious and tribal figures, government employees, and professionals.

1.3.30 While in general a return to the southern governorates would not breach Article 15c, decision makers must consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the person's individual circumstances which might nevertheless place them at risk. Such factors might include – but not limited to - the person's age, gender, health, ethnicity, religious sect, disability, and profession. Some persons, especially those who reside in areas where they are a minority, may face a heightened risk of indiscriminate violence. Decision makers must also consider carefully whether the existence of such factors means that the harm that a person fears is not in fact indiscriminate, but targeted, if not at them personally, for Refugee Convention reasons.

1.3.31 The security situation remains fluid and decision makers will need to take account the person's individual circumstances and the latest country information in assessing if a person is at risk of harm

See Country information, Southern governorates

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Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)

1.3.32 The KRI governorates are Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dahuk. The territory is predominantly populated by Kurds.

1.3.33 The security situation in KRI remained stable in 2014, with low levels of violence. Over recent years civilians killed per month have remained in the single figures. Mass casualty terrorist attacks were rare in KRI, although in November 2014 a suicide bomber launched an attack on a government building in Erbil, resulting in approximately 10 fatalities. ISIL later assumed responsibility.

1.3.34 The threat from ISIL remains present along the KRI borders with Ninewa and Diyala. In August 2014 an ISIL offensive threatened local populations in southern Erbil, resulting in localised displacement. However by the end of 2014 Kurdish forces had been able to launch an effective counter-offensive, making advances into ISIL held territories.

1.3.35 In general given that KRI is stable and has very low levels of violence a person returning there would not face a breach of Article 15(c).

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Are those at risk able to internally relocate within Iraq?

1.3.36 Internal relocation may be a viable option but only if the risk is not present in the place of relocation and it would not be unduly harsh to expect a person to do so.

1.3.37 In considering whether or not a person may internally relocate, decision makers must take into account the particular circumstances of the person, the nature of the threat and how far it would extend, and whether or not it would be unduly harsh to expect the person to relocate. This should include consideration of the age, gender, health, ethnicity, religion, financial circumstances and support network of the claimant, as well as the security, human rights and socio-economic conditions in the proposed area of relocation, including the claimant's ability to sustain themselves.

See Asylum Instruction, Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status, section 8, and Country Information and Guidance, Iraq, Internal relocation (and technical obstacles), December 2014 and

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Policy Summary

1.3.38 The security situation has deteriorated in Baghdad, Babil, and the southern governorates, while the situation remains relatively stable in the KRI. However the situation has not deteriorated to such an extent that it has reached a level that in general a removal to these governorates would be in breach of Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive.

1.3.39 Decision makers should consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the person's individual circumstances which might nevertheless place them at enhanced risk, particularly in Baghdad and Babil governorates.

1.3.40 However, the security situation remains fluid and decision makers should take into account up-to-date country information in assessing risks faced by persons.

1.3.41 Internal relocation may be a viable option but only if the risk is not present in the place of relocation and it would not be unduly harsh to expect a person to do so. Each case will need to be considered on its individual facts.

1.3.42 **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.**

See also the Asylum Instruction(s) on: Non-Suspensive Appeals: Certification Under Section 94 of the NIA Act 2002; Humanitarian Protection and Discretionary Leave

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Section 2: Information

Date Updated: 1 April 2015

2.1 Overview

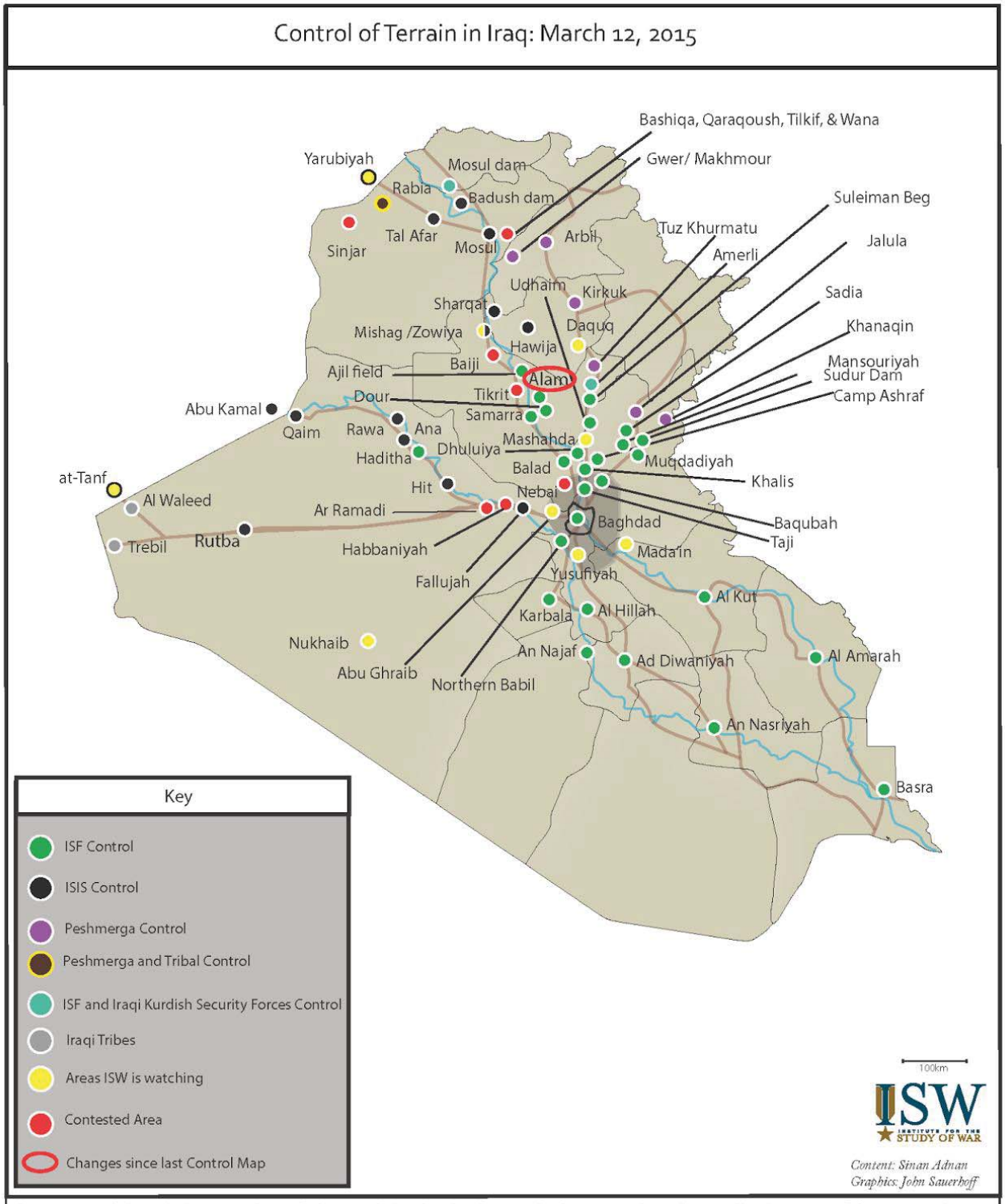
2.1.1 Iraq remained one of the most vulnerable states in the world in 2014, ranked 13th on the Fund for Peace's, 'Fragile State's Index', with weak or poor scores against all twelve primary social, economic and political indicators and the lowest possible recorded scores on security apparatus and group grievances, which included internal armed conflict and sectarian based conflicts.[1]

2.1.2 The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, Conflict Barometer 2013, ranked the conflict with Sunni militant groups, which had began in 2003, as a war (intensity rating of five, the highest level). Other conflicts, including conflict involving Al Sadr and other Shiite militant groups was ranked as a violent crisis (intensity rating of three).[2]

2.1.3 The Institute for the Study of War provided the following snapshot showing control of terrain in Iraq, as of 12 March 2015. For access to the latest map refer to the source directly:

[1] Fund for Peace, 'Fragile States Index 2014', http://ffp.statesindex.org/2014-iraq, date accessed: 11 February 2015

[2] The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, Conflict Barometer 2013, http://hiik.de/de/downloads/data/downloads_2013/ConflictBarometer2013.pdf, date accessed: 11 February 2015



The main area of Alam sub-district, northeast of Tikrit, was declared retaken from ISIS by the ISF, Iraqi Shi'a militias, and local Iraqi Sunni fighters on March 9, 2015. Since then, there have been no reports of clashes in the area to suggest a continued presence of ISIS or a concrete effort by ISIS to retake Alam from the control of the combined forces. ISW is therefore changing the status of Alam from ISIS controlled to ISF controlled.

NB: The above map refers to ISIS, an alternative name for ISIL, and the ISF (Iraqi Security Forces). [3]

2.1.4 Further updates on areas of control are available on the ISW's website: http://www.understandingwar.org/iraq-blog

[3] Institute of the Study of War, Control of Terrain in Iraq, http://www.understandingwar.org/iraq-blog 12 March 2015, accessed 26 March 2015

2.1.5 The UNAMI Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, observing the situation in the country as a whole stated:

'Six months since the so called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) seized the city of Mosul and instigated the current crisis, the acts of terrorism and the ongoing armed conflict between the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and affiliated forces, on the one hand, and ISIL and associated armed groups on the other, continue to take a heavy toll on civilians. The conflict continues to be characterized by widespread acts of violence and gross violations and abuses of human rights of an increasingly sectarian nature. In large areas of the country, violence has led to a deterioration of the rule of law and impunity for those perpetrating violations and abuses… Owing to increasing limitations on UNAMI/OHCHR capacity to verify reports of civilian casualties, the figures cited should be regarded as absolute minimums. The actual number of civilian victims of the violence could be much higher. The number of civilians who have died from the secondary effects of violence, such as lack of access to basic food, water or medicine, after fleeing their homes or who remained trapped in areas under ISIL control or in areas of conflict, remains unknown. Children, pregnant women, persons with disabilities and elderly people have been particularly vulnerable.

'As of 10 December 2014, it was estimated that more than two million persons have been displaced within Iraq, comprising some 334,011 families. Over 945,000 individuals are displaced in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), while over 900,000 were spread throughout other governorates, including Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din, with smaller numbers in Karbala, Babil, Najaf, Muthanna, Thi-Qar and Basra. Areas under the control of ISIL and associated armed groups or in areas characterized by violence remain difficult to access for the provision of humanitarian assistance. Large numbers of civilians remained trapped or displaced in areas under the control of ISIL and their security and access to humanitarian assistance remained of primary concern. With the onset of winter, it has become even more critical to ensure that the basic humanitarian needs of all those displaced or affected by the violence are met.

'UNAMI/OHCHR continued to receive reports of serious violations of international humanitarian law and gross human rights violations and abuses perpetrated by ISIL, with an apparent systematic and widespread character. These include attacks directly targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, executions and other targeted killings of civilians, abductions, rape and other forms of sexual and gender based violence perpetrated against women and children, slavery and trafficking of women and children, forced recruitment of children, destruction or desecration of places of religious or cultural significance, wanton destruction and looting of property, and denial of fundamental freedoms.'[4]

2.1.6 The same report stated that: 'In December [2014], conflict was ongoing through parts of Anbar, Ninewa, Salah al-Din, Kirkuk and Diyala governorates. The Iraqi security forces continue to make gains in many areas. Other terrorist attacks and instances of violence continued to take place in Baghdad and other areas of the country, not directly affected by the recent armed conflict.'

2.1.7 The FCO reported in December 2014 that:

'Levels of terrorist violence in Iraq have remained high over the last three months [October to December 2014]. More than 1030 people were killed in Baghdad between October and December. On 19 November, a suicide bomber killed at least four people in Erbil. This was the first significant bomb attack in Erbil in over a year. The UN reported that at least 2,472 civilians and 1,134 members of the Iraqi Security Forces have been killed since October… Reports continue to appear of sectarian atrocities and human

[4] UNAMI, Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, Introduction, February 2015 http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=tag&tag=Human

rights abuses committed by Shia militias. In their report, Absolute Impunity , Amnesty International claim that the executions, abductions and extortion that have been committed by Shia militias amount to war crimes.' [5]

2.1.8 Jane's observed in January 2015 that

'Fatalities are highest among the Iraqi civilian population. Growing anti-government and anti-Shia sentiment within Sunni constituencies has helped Islamic State establish control over the majority of territory in Anbar, Salaheddine, and Nineveh, and this is enabling them to contest territory in Kirkuk, Diyalah, Babil and Baghdad provinces. In insurgent-occupied territory, civilians are at severe risk of execution and torture if they fail to comply with Sharia law or are suspected of working against the Islamic State. In contested areas, Coalition airstrikes and indiscriminate Iraqi army airstrikes present severe death and injury risks for civilians. In non-insurgent occupied or contested territory in northern and central Iraq, Sunni insurgents are likely to use IED-based and shooting attacks to target security forces, government officials, Shia individuals, neighbourhoods, and religious sites. Sunni insurgents also have the capability to mount co-ordinated attacks, combining suicide bombing with fire and manoeuvre and taking hostages… The deployment of Shia militias to protect religious shrines and to combat the Islamic State also presents a high risk of retaliatory attacks targeting Sunni civilians. Such attacks are likely to follow mass executions targeting captured Shia militiamen, Iraqi soldiers or civilians by jihadists. [Vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices] VBIED attacks are likely in Baghdad's Shia neighbourhoods, targeting public spaces including markets, mosques and government buildings. Such attacks pose severe death and injury risks to bystanders. Neighbourhoods adjacent to the Green Zone, such as Karadat Maryam, are among the safest from IED attacks but not immune. There is also a high risk of inaccurate mortar and rocket fire targeting those areas, along with Baghdad International Airport.'[6]

2.2 New government and policies

2.2.1 Following the national elections in April 2014, the incumbent Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki's State of Law bloc was the dominant political group. However Maliki's '… route to a third term was upended by the June 204 IS-led offensive. U.S. officials largely blamed the offensive's success on Maliki's efforts to marginalize Sunni leaders and citizens.' [7] The UNAMI report covering events between 11 September and 10 December 2014, stated:

'… on 8 September, the new Iraqi Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, announced the formation of a national unity government. The Council of Representatives [COR] also approved al-Abadi's proposed ministerial programme that included a number of reforms aimed at tackling issues such as corruption, the restructuring of the armed forces, marginalisation and human rights violations. As part of this ministerial programme, on 9 September the Council of Ministers established a reconstruction fund to rebuild areas damaged by the conflict and military operations. Furthermore, the Council of Ministers agreed to compensate and facilitate the return of displaced persons to their homes and to prepare a national action plan to assist them.

[5] Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Human Rights and Democracy Report 2014, Countries of Concern: Iraq, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/iraq-country-of-concern/iraq-country-of-concern-latest-update-31-december-2014 12 March 2015, accessed on 26 March 2015

[6] Janes, Iraq, Security, updated 26 January 2015, https://janes.ihs.com/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1303454, accessed 26 March 2015 (subscription only)

[7] Congressional Research Service, Iraq: Politics, Security, and US Policy, p18, http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21968.pdf 27 February 2015, accessed on 26 March 2015

‘On 13 September, the Prime Minister announced the halting of shelling and airstrikes by ISF against civilian-populated areas and reiterated his commitment to the protection of civilians.’ [8]

2.2.2 The Congressional Research Service observed that::

‘The Cabinet appeared to satisfy U.S. and Iraqi factional demands for inclusiveness of the Sunni Arabs and the Kurds. Factional disputes caused Abbadi to avoid naming choices for the key security posts of Defense and Interior ministers, and agreement on the two posts was not achieved until October 23, when the COR confirmed Mohammad Salem al-Ghabban as Interior Minister and Khalid al-Ubaydi as Defense Minister. The selection of Ghabban drew criticism from many Sunni figures because he is a leader of the Badr Organization, the political arm of the Shiite militia of the same name. The faction is headed by Hadi Al-Amiri, who many Shiites were suggesting be named Interior Minister, but who was strongly opposed by Sunnis because of the militia’s abuses of Sunnis during the sectarian conflict of 2006-2008. Ubaydi, a Sunni, was an aircraft engineer during the rule of Saddam Hussein, and became a university professor after Saddam’s downfall.

‘A major feature of the Abbadi government is that it incorporates many senior faction leaders, although some posts lack significant authority.’ [9]

2.2.3 The new government’s policies have attempted to address some of the Sunnis grievances:

‘U.S. officials say they have pressed Abbadi, with some success, to adopt policies that can win greater support among Sunnis. He has ordered the ISF to cease shelling Sunni-inhabited areas that are under the control of Islamic State forces and abolished the “Office of the Commander-in- Chief,” restoring the regular chain of command. In November 2014, he replaced 36 Iraqi Army commanders and 24 Interior Ministry officials. Abbadi has also sought to publicly disclose significant instances of corruption; he announced in November 2014 that 50,000 ISF personnel on the payrolls were not actually performing military service.

‘In an attempt to alter Sunni opinion, Abbadi has also announced that a “National Guard” force will be established in which locally recruited fighters, reporting to provincial governments, will protect their home provinces from the Islamic State. The program appears mostly intended to blunt Islamic State influence from Sunni-inhabited areas, and appears intended to revive the concept behind the “Awakening”/Sons of Iraq program, discussed above. The announced program, which received cabinet approval in February 2015 and requires COR approval, appears to reflect a recognition by Abbadi and other Shiite leaders that Sunni Iraqis do not want Shiite-led security forces policing Sunni areas. However, the program is planned to also apply to Shiite militias who want to secure Shiite areas, sparking opposition from Sunnis. Also in February 2015, the cabinet approved an amendment to the “de-Baathification” laws (see above) to further re-integrate former members of Saddam’s Baath Party into the political process and presumably reduce Sunni resentment of the government. In February 2015, Abbadi lifted the long-standing Baghdad curfew as part of an effort to reduce the sense of Islamic State siege on the government.

‘The Abbadi government’s attempts to address Sunni demands have also caused agitation among its Shiite base. Activists in Basra Province, through which the majority of Iraq’s oil is exported, are attempting to revive a 2008 effort to convert the province into an

[8] UNAMI, Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, p2, February 2015 http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=tag&tag=Human Rights&lang=en accessed on 31 March 2015

[9] Congressional Research Service, Iraq: Politics, Security, and US Policy, p18, http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21968.pdf 27 February 201, accessed on 26 March 2015

autonomous region similar to the KRG. Those supporting forming a region assert that the province does not receive a fair share of national revenues. Holding a referendum on region formation requires obtaining signatures of 10% of the province's 160,000 voters, or the support of one-third of the members of the Basra provincial council. Neither of these benchmarks has been achieved to date.

'On the other hand, abuses committed by Shiite militias, as well as the appointment of Badr Organization figure Mohammad al-Ghabban as Interior Minister, appear to be slowing any broad Sunni shift toward the government and away from supporting the Islamic State. Abbadi's visit to Iran during October 20-21, 2014, raised questions among experts that Abbadi might still be susceptible to arguments from some Iranian leaders to rally the Shiite base and refuse compromise with Sunni factions. After the killing by the militias of a senior Sunni cleric, Shaykh Qasim al-Janabi, in February 2015, Sunni members boycotted the COR for one week.'[10]

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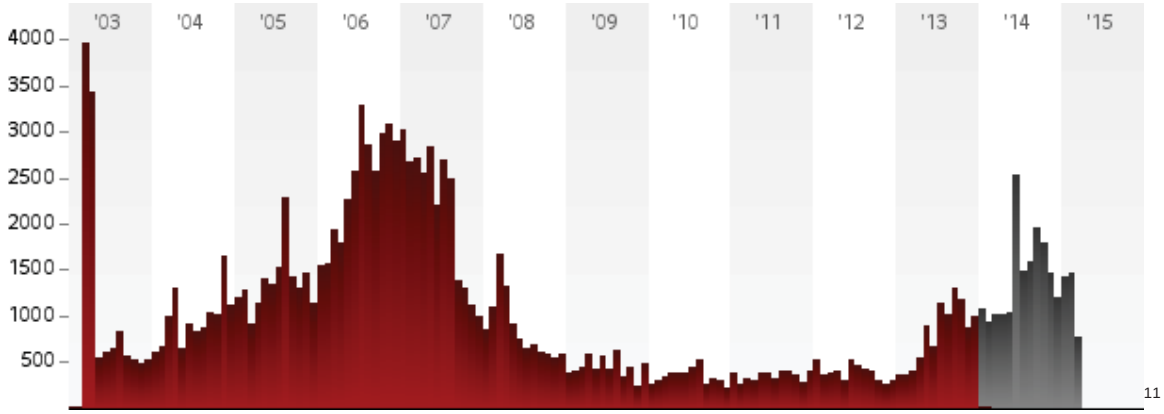
2.3 Recent trends in violence in Iraq

2.3.1 The Iraq Body Count database shows fatality trends in Iraq since the start of the conflict in 2003, in the graph titled, 'Documented civilian deaths from violence':



[11]

2.3.2 The IBC also observed that: '17,049 civilians have been recorded killed in Iraq during 2014 (up to Dec 30). This is roughly double the number recorded in 2013 (9,743), which in turn was roughly double the number in 2012 (4,622). These numbers do not include combatant deaths, which even by the most cautious tallies have also seen a sharp rise in 2014.'[12]

2.3.3 The UNAMI report covering the period 11 September to 10 December 2014 stated:

'From the beginning of January until 10 December 2014, at least 33,368 civilians casualties have resulted from the ongoing violence, including at least 11,602 killed and 21,766 wounded. In the period between 1 June and 10 December 2014, when the conflict spread from Anbar to other areas of Iraq, UNAMI/OHCHR recorded at least 20,252 civilian casualties, including at least 7,801 killed, and 12,451 wounded.

'Additionally, the number of civilians who have died from the secondary effects of violence, such as lack of access to basic food, water or medicine, after fleeing their homes or who remained trapped in areas under ISIL control or in areas of conflict is

[10] Congressional Research Service, Iraq: Politics, Security, and US Policy, p19-20, http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21968.pdf 27 February 2015, accessed on 26 March 2015
[11] Iraq Body Count, Database, https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/ undated, accessed on 26 March 2015
[12] Iraq Body Count, Iraq 2014: Civilian deaths almost doubling year on year, https://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/2014/ 1 January 2015, accessed on 26 March 2015

unknown. Children, pregnant women, persons with disabilities, and elderly people remain particularly vulnerable.' [13]

2.3.4 The UNAMI collated the following data to March 2015 for the whole of Iraq:

Month	Killed	Injured
March 2015	729	785
February 2015	611	1353
January 2015	790	1469
December 2014	680	1360
November 2014	936	1826
October 2014	856	1490
September 2014	854	1604
August 2014	1265	1198
July 2014	1186	1978
June 2014	1531	1763
May 2014	603	1108
April 2014	610	1311
March 2014	484	1104
February 2014	564	1179
January 2014	618	1052
December 2013	661	1201
November 2013	565	1186
October 2013	852	1793
September 2013	887	1957
August 2013	716	1936
July 2013	928	2109
June 2013	685	1610
May 2013	963	2191
April 2013	595	1481
March 2013	229	853
February 2013	418	704
January 2013	319	960
December 2012	230	655
November 2012	445	1306

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[13] UNAMI, Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, p4, February 2015 http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=tag&tag=Human Rights&lang=en accessed on 31 March 2015

2.3.5 Musings on Iraq considering the security situation in Iraq in 2014 observed:

‘The center of the country witnessed the most violence as usual…. Salahaddin had the highest number of attacks with 2,288, almost matched by Baghdad’s 2,278. After that Anbar had 1,912, Ninewa 1,390, Diyala 919, Babil 624, Kirkuk 573, Basra 119, Karbala 28, Wasit 26, Qadisiyah 24, Maysan 13, Dhi Qar 7, Najaf 5, Muthanna 2, and Irbil 1. Salahaddin was the base for several insurgent groups such as the Baathist Naqshibandi and the Islamic State. They were carrying out a concerted effort to undermine the security forces there at the start of the year, and then became one of the main battlefronts in Iraq after the summer. Baghdad has always been a favorite target of insurgents who were attempting to stoke sectarian tensions, and undermine the government. Anbar was where open fighting started at the very end of 2013. Ninewa was very similar to Salahaddin where insurgents focused upon Mosul and the surrounding areas going after the security forces, government officials, and the tribes to prepare for the summer. Diyala, Babil and Kirkuk had longtime militant bases in places like the Hamrin Mountains, Jurf al-Sakhr and Hawija, which were used to launch operations into the surrounding areas. Basra surprisingly had the sixth most attacks. IS launched some car bombs into the province, but there was a lot of other violent activities there likely done by gangs and militias. The rest of the south saw sporadic attacks, but were largely saved from the chaos going on in the rest of Iraq.

‘Musings On Iraq recorded 24,725 killed and 37,970 wounded. That was by far the highest amount for any organization tracking violence in Iraq. Iraq Body Count’s year end figure was 17,073. That included civilians, police, sahwa, and militiamen, but not the army or peshmerga. The United Nations had 12,282 deaths and 23,126 injured, while the Iraqi government reported, 15,538 fatalities and more than 22,000 wounded. Musings On Iraq uses Iraqi and international press reports, and is no way comprehensive. There are plenty of incidents that do not get covered. The Iraqi and Kurdish government also stopped reporting on Iraqi Security Force (ISF) and peshmerga losses when the summer offensive stared. Towards the end of the year however, the Peshmerga Ministry did release some figures on its casualties from after June.

‘The number of deaths by province largely followed the number of attacks in each… Salahaddin had 5,725 fatalities, Baghdad 5,160, Anbar 4,881, Diyala 2,130, Babil 1,507, 874 in Kirkuk, 200 in Karbala, 128 in Basra, 42 in Wasit, 18 in Najaf, 15 in Maysan, 10 in Irbil and Qadisiyah each, 8 in Muthanna, and 6 in Dhi Qar.

‘June was the deadliest month with 4,172. Deaths remained high for the following four months with an average of 2,414 deaths each. Then the figures dropped with 1,831 in November and 1,774 in December the lowest amount of the year.

‘Civilians were the main casualties in Iraq… 17,098 died during the year, with another 26,590 wounded. The army and police had 6,152 deaths and 6,757 injured, the peshmerga 895 killed and 4,034 wounded, the Asayesh, 8 dead and 13 wounded, and the sahwa 570 killed and 576 injured. Again, these figures show the lack of reporting by government agencies for losses amongst the security forces. The difference between the number of peshmerga dead and wounded was more than four fold. Conversely, the numbers for the ISF’s fatalities and injured were almost the same. Usually there are twice or more injured as killed in wars pointing to a lack of information being shared by the authorities… Vehicle borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) have been a major tool of the Islamic State and mark its rise and fall during the year. From January to May there were 91.6 car bombs per month. This was a sign that IS was preparing for its summer offensive. Surprisingly this type of attack declined in the following months with an average of 53.1 from June to December. In fact, by the end of the year, it appeared

[14]UNAMI, UN Casualties for March 2015, 1 April 2015, http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=3565:un-casualty-figures-for-march-2015&Itemid=633&lang=en accessed on 1 April 2015

that IS's networks were thoroughly disrupted as there were only 21 VBIEDs in December, the fewest since 2012 with only one car bomb wave lasting three days from December 9-11. A further sign that IS had lost its capabilities was the fact that southern Iraq, which had been a favorite target to stir sectarian divisions, was not attacked at all during November and December. Instead VBIEDs were increasingly used in military operations in Anbar and Salahaddin against the ISF.'[15]

2.3.6 Although most fatalities occurred in contested areas of Ninewa, Anbar and Salah al-Din, Baghdad continued to experience significant levels of violence, recording the highest number of fatalities in a single province in 2014.[16] Musings on Iraq tabulated provisional statistics on the number of security incidents, deaths (including civilians and non-civilians, such as members of the security forces and ISIL) based on media reports during 2014:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	**Yr**
Anb	241	173	213	181	139	157	147	143	105	174	110	129	**1,912**
Bab	36	47	50	60	87	59	65	71	43	44	35	27	**624**
Bag	222	185	207	180	192	181	220	172	189	152	177	201	**2,278**
Bas	4	7	7	16	15	8	11	12	11	15	4	9	**119**
Dhi	2	1	1		1	1	1						**7**
Diy	70	65	71	70	59	132	150	94	57	57	42	52	**919**
Irb											1		**1**
Kar		2	1	1	1	1	5	9	5	1		2	**28**
Kir	50	71	52	68	24	63	63	58	43	23	24	34	**573**
May	3	2	1	2	1					1	3		**13**
Mut	1			1									**2**
Naj						1	1		2	1			**5**
Nin	169	184	180	186	183	101	82	76	52	65	54	58	**1,390**
Qad	1				1		7	6	5	1	2	1	**24**
Sal	209	216	204	219	201	196	185	171	177	205	140	165`	**2,288**
Was	6	2	5	6	1	1		1	1	2	1		**26**
Mo	**1,014**	**955**	**992**	**990**	**905**	**901**	**937**	**813**	**690**	**741**	**593**	**678**	**10,209**

Chart 2 - Deaths In Iraq By Province 2014

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	**Yr**
Anb	300	184	343	271	310	523	448	395	658	624	560	265	**4,881**
Bab	23	118	129	108	137	251	183	120	52	250	72	64	**1,507**
Bag	504	352	340	387	390	357	453	419	441	590	488	439	**5,160**
Bas	3	6	7	15	15	17	24	10	19	6	2	4	**128**
Dhi	1	1	1		1	1	1						**6**
Diy	156	72	113	117	79	293	263	256	66	173	227	315	**2,130**
Irb											10		**10**
Kar		5	4	3	1	5	128	14	13	26		1	**200**
Kir	37	40	29	70	42	185	118	124	89	13	51	76	**874**
May	2	2	1	6	1					1	2		**15**

[15] Musings on Iraq, 2014 Deadliest Year In Iraq Since Civil War Period, 6 January 2015, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/2014-deadliest-year-in-iraq-since-civil_6.html accessed on 20 March 2015

[16] Iraq Body Count, 'Iraq 2014: Civilian deaths almost doubling year on year', 1 January 2015, https://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/2014/, date accessed: 19 January 2015

Mut	1			7									**8**
Naj						13			5				**18**
Nin	171	206	192	243	204	1,042	89	971	275	201	129	122	**3,845**
Qad	1						2		6		1		**10**
Sal	280	297	438	208	282	1,484	590	525	552	461	286	322	**5,725**
Was	4	2	9	21		1				2	3		**42**
Mo	**1,483**	**1,285**	**1,606**	**1,456**	**1,462**	**4,172**	**2,299**	**2,834**	**2,176**	**2,347**	**1,831**	**1,608 +166 1,774**	**24,725 (+166)**

Wounded In Iraq By Province 2014

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	**Yr**
Anb	730	437	627	555	563	592	866	677	590	487	453	334	**6,911**
Bab	85	264	283	212	273	326	342	243	185	202	207	103	**2,725**
Bag	1,103	828	874	870	811	840	817	958	1,179	1,399	1,263	849	**11,791**
Bas	1			1	1	12	16	21		1		1	**54**
Dhi	1	4				19	4						**28**
Diy	150	138	159	233	89	337	279	258	144	205	569	81	**2,642**
Irb											23		**23**
Kar		5	15			12	70	40	25	55		4	**226**
Kir	151	85	102	176	64	224	248	321	116	56	52	40	**1,635**
May				17									**17**
Mut				35									**35**
Naj						70			12				**82**
Nin	188	277	260	358	372	277	197	563	27	68 + 1,230		81	**3,898**
Qad					1		2	5	20				**28**
Sal	463	490	555	420	428	975	478	537	749	678	453	432	**6,658**
Was	8	3	14	47		17					15		**104**
Mo	**2,880**	**2,531**	**2,889**	**2,924**	**2,602**	**3,701**	**3,319**	**3,623**	**3,047**	**3,151 + 1,230**	**3,035**	**1,925 + 1,113**	**37,970 (+1113)**

[17]

2.3.7 Joel Wing in Musings on Iraq, collated media reports on the number of incidents and casualties across Iraq by week from June 2014 to February 2015. The number of incidents in March 2015 (616) was broadly similar to those in February 2015. The

[17] Musings on Iraq, Charts On Violence In Iraq 2014 Part I - Provincial Statistics, 6 January 2015, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/charts-on-violence-in-iraq-2014-part-i.html accessed on 26 January 2015

number of incidents and casualties were highest in the summer of 2014 and gradually decline to early 2015:

Date	Incidents	Dead	Wounded
Jun 1-7	228	612	1,020
Jun 8-14	234	1,889	890
Jun 15-21	177	804	755
Jun 22-28	207	740	800
Jun 29-30	59	127	236
JUN	**905**	**4,172**	**3,701**
Jul 1-7	203	526	651
Jul 8-14	214	577	628
Jul 15-21	230	444	1,009
Jul 22-28	224	589	801
Jul 29-31	66	163	230
JUL	**937**	**2,299**	**3,319**
Aug 1-8	270	1,122	885
Aug 9-14	180	710	1,152
Aug 15-21	150	731	499
Aug 22-28	156	523	798
Aug 29-31	59	125	289
AUG	**815**	**3,211**	**3,623**
Sep 1-7	169	616	751
Sep 8-14	168	467	731
Sep 15-21	170	625	794
Sep 22-28	157	396	576
Sep 29-30	49	126	287
SEP	**713**	**2,230**	**3,139**
Oct 1-7	175	456	687
Oct 8-14	189	560	880
Oct 15-21	159	499	780
Oct 22-28	160	346	596 + 1,230
Oct 29-31	72	574	227
OCT	**755**	**2,434**	**3,170 + 1,230**
Nov 1-7	154	611	828
Nov 8-14	134	470	607
Nov 15-21	139	323	479
Nov 22-28	139	321	640
Nov 29-30	40	206	535
NOV	**606**	**1,931**	**3,089**
Dec 1-7	148	581	482
Dec 8-14	156	233 + 166	444 + 1,113
Dec 15-21	133	377	340
Dec 22-28	161	558	494
Dec 29-31	91	117	233
DEC	**689**	**2,032**	**3,106**
Jan 1-7	184	434	464
Jan 8-14	170	730	493

Jan 15-21	182	390	515
Jan 22-28	189	466	894
Jan 29-31	90	288	529
JAN	**815**	**2,308**	**2,895**
Feb 1-7	155	380	688
Feb 8-14	170	406	559
Feb 15-21	165	573	364
Feb 22-28	165	371	687 + 386
FEB	**655**	**1,730**	**2,683**
Mar 1-7	172	372	587
Mar 8-14	133	348	656
Mar 15-21	141	299	503
Mar 22-28	170	235	406
MAR*	616	1254	2152

* Does not include final three days of the month[18]

2.3.8 The Iraq Body Count indicated that it was difficult to identify the perpetrators of violence in Iraq in 2014.[19] The IBC source observed:

'Among the 17,049 civilians recorded killed, many deaths were attributable to the actions of specific armed groups while the perpetrators of many killings remain unknown. 1,748 civilians were reported killed by Iraqi military air strikes, while 4,325 were killed by ISIS. A further 10,858 civilians were reported killed by unidentified actors, where it has not been possible to establish which of the major actors, or possibly other, less well-identified groups, were involved. 118 civilians were reported killed by US-Coalition air strikes, the first time since 2011 that civilian deaths have been directly attributable to US-Coalition actions.'[20]

2.3.9 The same source additionally observed a significant increase in combatant fatalities among insurgent groups such as ISIL.[21]

2.3.10 Data compiled by the blogger Joel Wing reported a marked decline in IEDs throughout 2014, indicating a declining capability by ISIL to launch such attacks. The source recorded 91.6 car bombs per month over the period January to May, which fell to 53.1 car bombs from June to December and only 21 VBIEDs in December, the fewest since 2012.[22]

2.3.11 Updates of the levels and trends in violence are provided in the blog, Musings on Iraq, maintained by Joel Wing.[23]

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Non state armed groups

[18] Musings on Iraq, Casualties Continue To Drop In Iraq 4th Week of March 2015, 30 March 2015, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/, accessed on 31 March 2105
[19] Iraq Body Count, 'Iraq 2014: Civilian deaths almost doubling year on year', 1 January 2015, https://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/2014/, date accessed: 19 January 2015
[20] Iraq Body Count, 'Iraq 2014: Civilian deaths almost doubling year on year', 1 January 2015, https://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/2014/, date accessed: 19 January 2015
[21] Iraq Body Count, 'Iraq 2014: Civilian deaths almost doubling year on year', 1 January 2015, https://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/2014/, date accessed: 19 January 2015
[22] Musings on Iraq, 2014 deadliest year in Iraq since civil war period', 6 January 2015, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/2014-deadliest-year-in-iraq-since-civil_6.html, date accessed: 20 January 2015
[23] Musings on Iraq, regularly updated, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/, accessed on 26 March 2015

2.3.12 Although the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) remained the main insurgent group in Iraq, other Sunni anti-government groups included Jaysh Rijal-al Tariqah al-Naqshabandia (JRTN), the General Military Council of Iraqi Revolutionaries, the Fallujah Military Council, the Council of Revolutionaries Tribes of Anbar, the 1920 Brigades, the Islamic Army of Iraq, Jayish al-Mujahidin and Ansar al-Islam.[24]

2.3.13 UNAMI reported that, 'On 28 October [2014] the Council of Ministers approved a decree regularizing the Popular Mobilization Units to fight against ISIL. A number of reports, however, indicated a number of armed groups fighting against ISIL operate outside of Government control.' [25] There are estimated to be 100,000 in the Shiite militias mobilised in the defence of Baghdad.[26] The main armed Shiite groups operating in Iraq were the Badr Brigades; the Mahdi Army; Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq and Kata'ib Hizbullah. According to Amnesty International, Shia groups were backed by successive Iraqi governments and operated like regular armed forces, but outside any legal framework.[27]

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2.4 Displacement

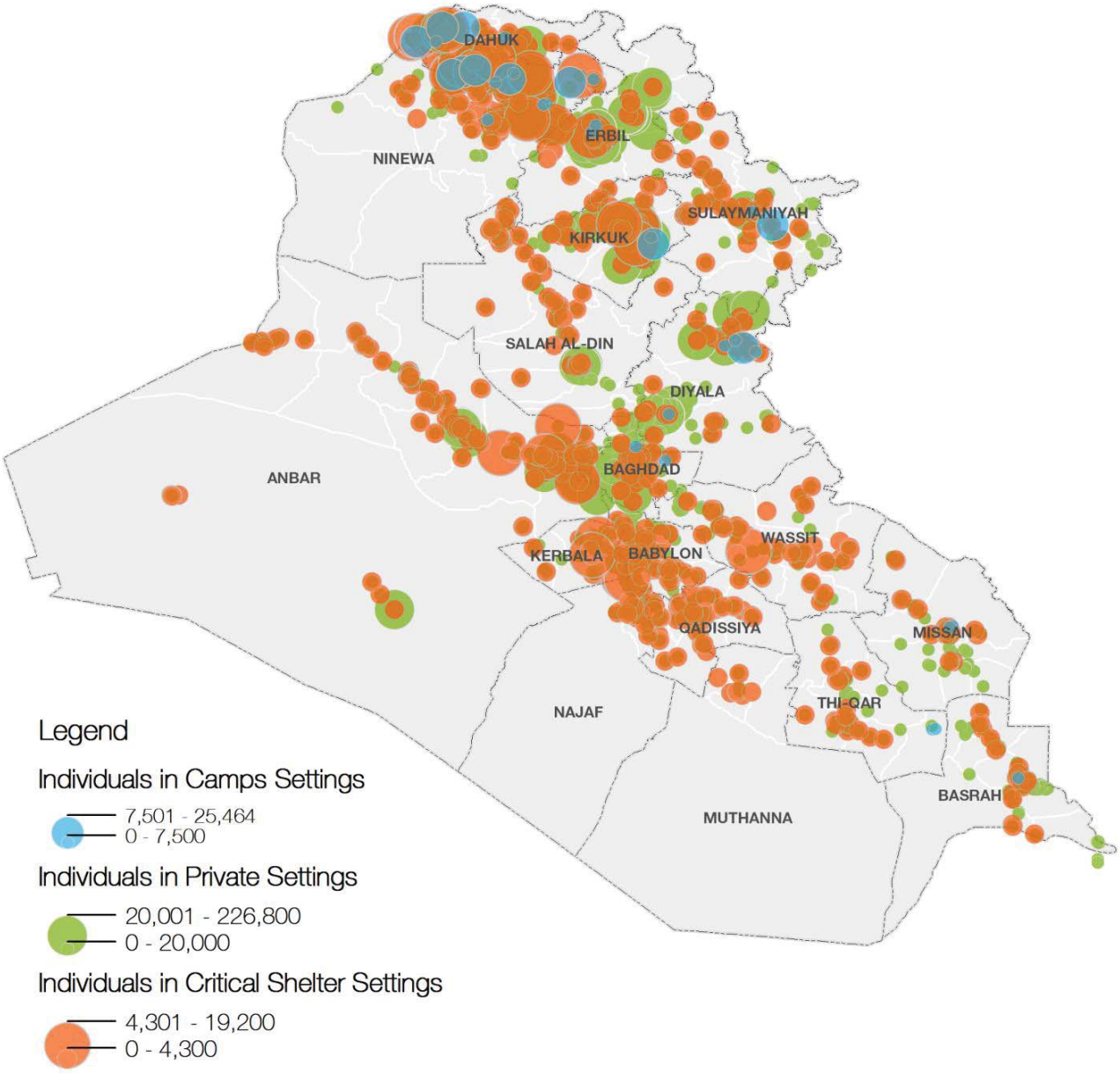
2.4.1 From the beginning of January 2014 through 12 March 2015, the DTM identified 2,634,492 internally dis-placed individuals (439,082 families) dispersed across 2,949 distinct locations in Iraq… The map below represents the displaced population by private, camp and critical shelter settings:

[24] 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, date accessed: 19 January 2015

[25] UNAMI, Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 11 September to 10 December 2014, p19, February 2015, 2014 http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=tag&tag=Human Rights&lang=en accessed on 1 April 2105

[26] Congressional Research Service, Iraq: Politics, Security, and US Policy, 27 February 2015, p10, http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21968.pdf 27 February 2015, accessed on 26 March 2015

[27] Amnesty International, 'Iraq: Absolute impunity: militia rule in Iraq', 14 October 2014, p.17, http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE14/015/2014/en/17cbb7ef-7ca4-4b5a-963e-661f256fddb0/mde140152014en.pdf, date accessed: 20 January 2015



[28]

2.4.2 The same source reported that: 'In total, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) hosts an estimated 1,034,448 displaced individuals (or 172,408 families),which accounts for 41% of the overall displaced populations. Outside of northern Iraq, Anbar hosts the second largest displaced population of 398,334 individuals (15%), followed by Kirkuk with 344,730 individuals (13%) and Baghdad with 325,692 displaced individuals (12%).' Approximately 2% of IDPs – just over 60,000 persons – were documented as being displaced from Baghdad, the majority (42,618) to different locations within the governorate.[29]

2.4.3 Further background on displacement trends in Iraq, refer to the Home Office country information and guidance report, 'Internal relocation (and technical obstacles)', 24 December 2014 and section 2.2

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[28] International Organisation for Migration, Displacement Tracking Index I DTM, Round XVI, p1, March 2015 http://iomiraq.net/dtm-page , accessed on 31 March 2015
[29] International Organisation for Migration, Displacement Tracking Index I DTM, Round XVI, p4, March 2015 http://iomiraq.net/dtm-page , accessed on 31 March 2015

2.5 Sectarianism

2.5.1 Sources identify the significance of sectarian divisions in Iraq, which have been exacerbated in 2014 following an increase in violence that has affected civilians of all ethnic and religious backgrounds. The OCHA 2014/15 Iraq Humanitarian Needs Overview: Summary, published in October 2014, explained that this included not only minorities such as Yezidis; Christians or Turkmen in the north, but also included Shiites and Sunnis. The source also observed that, '[p]rotection concerns are equally faced by groups who are now in the minority in the areas of displacement, including those from Shia and Sunni communities.'[30]

2.5.2 Sectarianism remained a driver of violence with ISIL adapting its political and military strategy, for example by targeting Shia civilians in Baghdad, to precipitate a sectarian response from the Iraqi government; as demonstrated by the handling of anti-government protests in late 2012.[31] In 2015 sectarian violence continued, in late January 2015 at least 72 people from the majority Sunni village of Barwanah in Diyala governorate were singled out and killed by Shia armed groups. A report carried by the New York Times reported that witness accounts suggested militia men started calling out names of people, prior to the mass execution. Intense clashes around Barwanah had occurred in the days preceding and in recent months Barwanah hosted a number of internally displaced persons, including those from the nearby village of Sinsil, a stronghold for ISIL according to local officials cited.[32]

2.5.3 In a speech at a security summit in Baghdad, Prime Minister Al-Abadi, making an apparent reference to the atrocities in Barwanah in January 2015 that government or militia fighters who took part in serious criminal behaviour should be regarded as 'outlaws' and were 'no less dangerous than terrorists'. [33]

2.5.4 Additional background information on sectarian divisions in Iraq can be found in the COI Service bulletin, Security Situation update 2013, dated August 2013.

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2.6 Security situation by governorate

Baghdad

Demography

2.6.1 The Central Organisation for Statistics and Information Technology estimated in 2003 that the population of Baghdad governorate in 2011 would be 7,055,196, while the population for Baghdad city in 2003-2007 would be 5,750,000.[34] The UN's Joint Analysis Unit estimated in 2013 that Baghdad governorate had a population of 6,696,596 (21.1% of total the Iraqi population) describing the province as 'surrounded by the governorates of Diyala, Wassit, Babil, Anbar, and Salah Al-Din. The governorate is the political and economic capital of Iraq. It is the smallest governorate but the most populous. The

[30] OCHA 2014/15 Iraq Humanitarian Needs Overview: Summary, published in October 2014, p.7, http://reliefweb.int/mwg-internal/de5fs23hu73ds/progress?id=My2beZzO3j, date accessed: 24 November 2014
[31] Institute for the Study of War, 'The Islamic State: a Counter-Strategy for a Counter-State', July 2014, p.23, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Lewis-Center%20of%20gravity.pdf, date accessed: 19 January 2015
[32] New York Times, Government Allies Are Said to Have Slaughtered Dozens of Sunnis in Iraq, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/30/world/middleeast/government-allies-are-said-to-have-killed-dozens-of-sunnis-in-iraq.html, date accessed: 2 February 2015
[33] Al Jazeerra, Iraqi PM talks tough amid more violence', 31 January 2015, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2015/01/iraqi-pm-talks-tough-violence-150131102234157.html, date accessed: 2 February 2015
[34] Central Organisation for Statistics and Information (accessed via Geohive), http://www.geohive.com/cntry/iraq.aspx, 2003, accessed on 26 March 2015

governorate is divided into ten districts: Abu Ghraib, Adhamiya, Kadhimiya, Karkh, Mada'in, Al-Resafa, Tarmia, Mahmoudiya, Sader/1, and Sader/2.'[35] Neither source takes into account movements into and out of the governorate during 2014 and 2015.

2.6.2 Precise information on the ethnic demography of Baghdad is limited. A US Congressional Research Service report in February 2015 referred to the population of Baghdad city as reportedly 80% Shia.[36] A letter from the British Embassy on 'Violence in Baghdad by Area', dated 31 August 2013, identified 'mixed' areas of Baghdad, which included the districts of Khadamiyah; Karkh; Doura; Karradah and Rusafa. Sunni areas were identified as Mansour, with small Sunni enclaves found in the district of Adhamiyah. Shia areas were identified as Sadr City; New Baghdad and Jihad Bayaa. [37]

2.6.3 For background information on the ethno-religious demographic changes in Baghdad, compare Columbia University's (The Gulf 2000 Project) reports, Ethno-religious neighbourhoods in Metropolitan Baghdad, end of 2009 and Ethno-religious neighbourhoods in Metropolitan Baghdad 2003. In a blog dated November 2009 in Musings on Iraq, Joel Wing discusses a series of maps produced by Dr. Michael Izady of Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs charting the segregation of Baghdad from 2003 to 2008. The maps indicate the Sunni dominated districts were increasingly in the western part of the city, with enclaves in the south and centre.[38] Musings on Iraq has selection of maps of Baghdad governorate and city[39].

Control of territory

2.6.4 The Institute for the Study of War, Control of Territory report, dated 12 March 2015, showed Baghdad governorate under the control of the Iraqi Security Forces.[40] The ISW's ISIL sanctuary map, as at 12 January 2015, showed ISIL attack and support zones include areas in and around Baghdad governorate.[41]

2.6.5 Sources indicated that non-state armed groups remained active within Baghdad governorate. Both the Long War Journal (LWJ) and the Institute for the Study of War reported that ISIL had adopted a battle plan against Baghdad based on the 'Baghdad Belts' offensive drawn up by ISIL's predecessor, the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). The plan sought to target the outer provinces and key areas surrounding the capital, with the aim of controlling to 'Baghdad Belts' before launching an assault on Baghdad city.[42] The ISW defined the Baghdad Belts as:

'[the] 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

[35] UN Joint Analysis Unit, Baghdad governorate profile, 2013 file:///G:/My%20Documents/GP-Baghdad%202013.pdf accessed on 26 March 2015
[36] Congressional Research Service, The 'Islamic State' Crisis and US Policy, p6, 11 February 2015, http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R43612.pdf accessed on 26 March 2015
[37] British Embassy Baghdad, 'Violence in Baghdad by area', 31 August 2013, available on request
[38] Musings on Iraq, Columbia University Charts Sectarian Cleansing of Baghdad, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2009/11/blog-post.html, 19 November 2009, accessed on 26 March 2015
[39] Musings on Iraq, undated, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/, accessed on 1 April 2015
[40] Institute for the Study of War, 'Control of Terrain in Iraq', 12 March 2015, http://www.understandingwar.org/iraq-blog 12 March 2015, date accessed 31 March 2015
[41] Institute for the Study of War, 'ISIS sanctuary map', 15 January 2015, http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-sanctuary-map-january-15-2015, date accessed: 19 January 2015
[42] ISI's 'Baghdad Belt's' plan was discovered after US forces found a hand drawn map on the body of Abu Musab al Zarqawi, Al Qaeda in Iraq's leader, who was killed in Baqubah in June 2006. See: The Long War Journal, 'Analysis: ISIS, allies reviving 'Baghdad belts' battle plan', http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/06/analysis_isis_allies.php#ixzz3PHlpCSic, June 1014, date accessed: 19 January 2015

belts include the cities of Taji, clockwise to Tarmiyah, Baqubah, Buhriz, Besmayah and Nahrwan, Salman Pak, Mahmudiyah, Sadr al-Yusufiyah, Fallujah, and Karmah. This "clock" can be divided into quadrants: Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and Northwest.'[43]

2.6.6 The LWJ explained:

'In the ISI's 2006 plan, the Baghdad belts were divided into five regions: the "Southern Belt," which included northern Babil and southern Diyala provinces [i.e. governorates]; the "Western belt," which included eastern Anbar province and the Thar Thar area [of Anbar]; the "Northern belt," which included southern Salahaddin province and cities such as Taji [in Baghdad governorate]; the "Diyala belt," which included Baqubah and Khalis; and the "Eastern belt," which included the rural areas east of Baghdad.' [44]

2.6.7 A background briefing from ISW entitled 'ISIS battle plan for Baghdad', dated 27 June 2014 reported at the time that ISIL likely had separate forces that could operate in the northern Baghdad Belts area as well as Anbar governorate[45], with forces north and south of Fallujah in Thar Thar (Anbar governorate) and Jurf al-Sakhar (Babil – see: Security situation in Babil).[46] Additionally the source noted that at the time of writing in June 2014, ISIL threatened to advance their operations towards Abu Ghraib in the west, whilst also seeking to open lines south east of Baghdad, especially in the vicinity of Mada'in.[47]

2.6.8 The ISW report also noted that ISIL was likely to have a presence within the city of Baghdad and that the capital remained potential vulnerable to mass-complex attacks including the use of SVESTs and SVBIEDs.[48]

2.6.9 A second report from the ISW entitled Beyond the Islamic State: Iraq's Sunni Insurgency', dated October 2014, also referred to other Sunni groups, including the General Military Council of Iraqi Revolutionaries, (GMCIR), Ansar al-Islam; Jaysh al-Mjahideen and the 1920 s Brigade, as operating in the so-called 'Baghdad Belts' region, notably in northern Baghdad and Abu-Ghraib district to the west.[49]

2.6.10 Sources also reported the mobilisation of Shia militia groups in Baghdad, including pro-Iranian paramilitary forces.[50]

Fatality trends

2.6.11 A number of sources compile data on fatalities and injuries using different methodologies and no dataset can be comprehensive, as such these sources can only provide a guide to the levels of violence.

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[43] Institute for the Study of War, Baghdad Belts, http://www.understandingwar.org/region/baghdad-belts, undated, accessed on 26 March 2015

[44] Long War Journal, 'Analysis: ISIS, allies reviving 'Baghdad belts' battle plan', http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/06/analysis_isis_allies.php#ixzz3PHlpCSic, date accessed: 19 January 2015

[45] Institute for the Study of War, 'ISIS Battle Plan for Baghdad', 27 June 2014, p.2, http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-battle-plan-baghdad, date accessed: 19 January 2015

[46] Institute for the Study of War, 'ISIS Battle Plan for Baghdad', 27 June 2014, p.3, http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-battle-plan-baghdad, date accessed: 19 January 2015

[47] Institute for the Study of War, 'ISIS Battle Plan for Baghdad', 27 June 2014, p.4, http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-battle-plan-baghdad, date accessed: 19 January 2015

[48] Institute for the Study of War, 'ISIS Battle Plan for Baghdad', 27 June 2014, p.5, http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-battle-plan-baghdad, date accessed: 19 January 2015

[49] Institute for the Study of War, 'Beyond The Islamic State: Iraq's Sunni Insurgency', xx October 2015, http://www.understandingwar.org/report/beyond-islamic-state-iraqs-sunni-insurgency, date accessed: 19 January 2015

[50] Institute for the Study of War, 'ISIS Battle Plan for Baghdad', 27 June 2014, p.5, http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-battle-plan-baghdad, date accessed: 19 January 2015 and Rudaw, 'Iranian official: Basij forces saved Baghdad from ISIS takeover', 14 December 2014, http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/141220143, date accessed: 20 January 2015

2.6.12 The following table details population, fatality and displacement figures for Baghdad (refer to the source footnoted for further details):

Population city / governorate	Circa 5 million / 6.6 to 7 million (see demography above)
Civilians killed	Based on IBC data between March 2003 and December 2013 a total of 61,325 civilians were killed in Baghdad. The average number of civilians killed in Baghdad governorate per month over this period was 472, including the surge of 2007/8 which had levels significantly higher than levels experienced in 2014/15. In 2012: 93 civilians killed per month (based on IBC data) In 2013: 224 civilians killed per month (based on IBC data) [51] [52] UNAMI documented 3,702 civilians were killed in Baghdad in 2014, However the Iraq Body Count (IBC) reported 4,767 civilians as killed in 2014.[53]
Civilians injured	8,375 civilians were injured in Baghdad in 2014, with an average of 698 civilians injured per month (UNAMI) [54]
Number of persons displaced	As of December 2014, 22,391 internally displaced families (IDPs) were being hosted in 307 locations in Baghdad.[55] 5,930 families were displaced from Baghdad; the majority of whom, 4,344, had relocated elsewhere within the governorate. As of December 2014, displacement from Baghdad accounted for 1.67 per cent of total displaced families (353,890) in Iraq.[56]

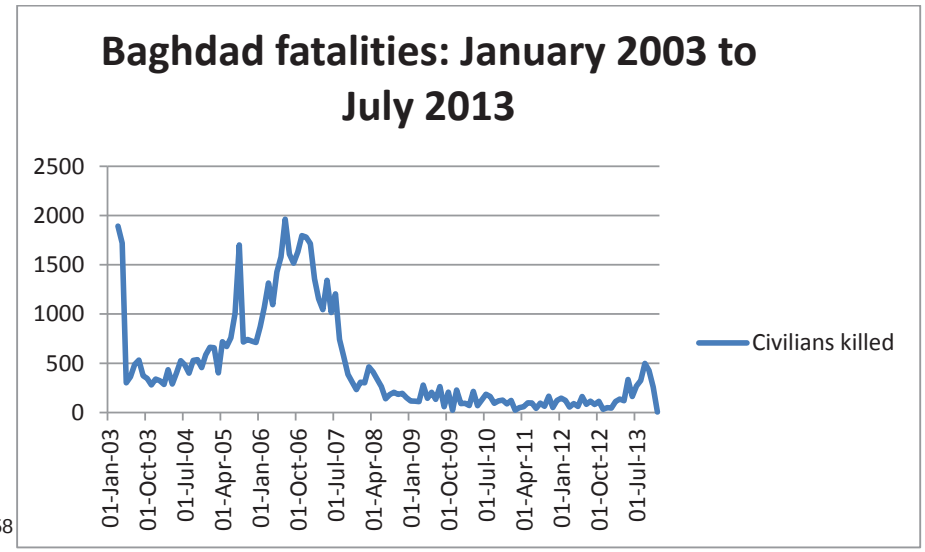
2.6.13 The Iraqi Body Count documented civilian fatalities in based on media reports for 'any perpetrators, in Baghdad province, any weapons, killing 1 or more' for the period 2010 to 2013 (data going back to 2003 is available via its database). These data may include civilians killed for criminal and non-conflict related reasons:

[51] Iraq Body Count database, data used between January 2003 and December 2013 (figures for December are incomplete), https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/, dat accessed: 06 August 2014
[52] Whilst UNAMI and IBC both record civilian fatality data, the methodology applied will vary and should be considered in any like-for-like comparison. For further details refer direct to the sources.
[53] Iraq Body Count, 'Iraq 2014: Civilian deaths almost doubling year on year', 1 January 2015, https://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/2014/, date accessed: 19 January 2015
[54] UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Civilian casualties, updated to December 2014, http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=tag&tag=Casualty%20Figures&Itemid=633&lang=en&limitstart=0, date accessed: 26 January 2015
[55] IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix, 'Iraq IDP crisis: January to December 25, 2014', http://iomiraq.net/file/1499/download?token=224aj8J0, date accessed: 26 January 2015
[56] IOM, 'Displacement Tracking Matrix', Datasets – 25 December 2014, http://iomiraq.net/file/1498/download?token=F38LG73i, date accessed: 26 January 2015

01-Jan-10	90
01-Feb-10	93
01-Mar-10	71
01-Apr-10	215
01-May-10	69
01-Jun-10	128
01-Jul-10	185
01-Aug-10	162
01-Sep-10	93
01-Oct-10	118
01-Nov-10	126
01-Dec-10	87
01-Jan-11	123
01-Feb-11	24
01-Mar-11	49
01-Apr-11	58
01-May-11	98
01-Jun-11	96
01-Jul-11	41
01-Aug-11	95
01-Sep-11	63
01-Oct-11	166
01-Nov-11	51
01-Dec-11	123
Total: 987	
01-Jan-12	146
01-Feb-12	123
01-Mar-12	56
01-Apr-12	91
01-May-12	62
01-Jun-12	163
01-Jul-12	83
01-Aug-12	115
01-Sep-12	81
01-Oct-12	113
01-Nov-12	33
01-Dec-12	50
Total: 1116	
01-Jan-13	45
01-Feb-13	112
01-Mar-13	136
01-Apr-13	120
01-May-13	335
01-Jun-13	162
01-Jul-13	270
01-Aug-13	325
01-Sep-13	498
01-Oct-13	426

01-Nov-13 258
01-Dec-13 390
Total: 3077
[57]

2.6.14 The following table, based on data obtained from the Iraq Body Count, shows fatality trends in Baghdad between March 2003 and December 2013:



[58]

2.6.15 The UNAMI monthly civilian casualties figures for Baghdad governorate were:

Month / Casualties	Fatalities	Injured	Total casualties
April 2013	211	486	697
May	532	1285	1817
June	258	692	950
July	238	719	957
August	317	955	1272
September	418	1011	1429
October	411	925	1336
November	224	399	623
December	254	555	809
April to December 2013 total	**2863**	**7027**	**9890**

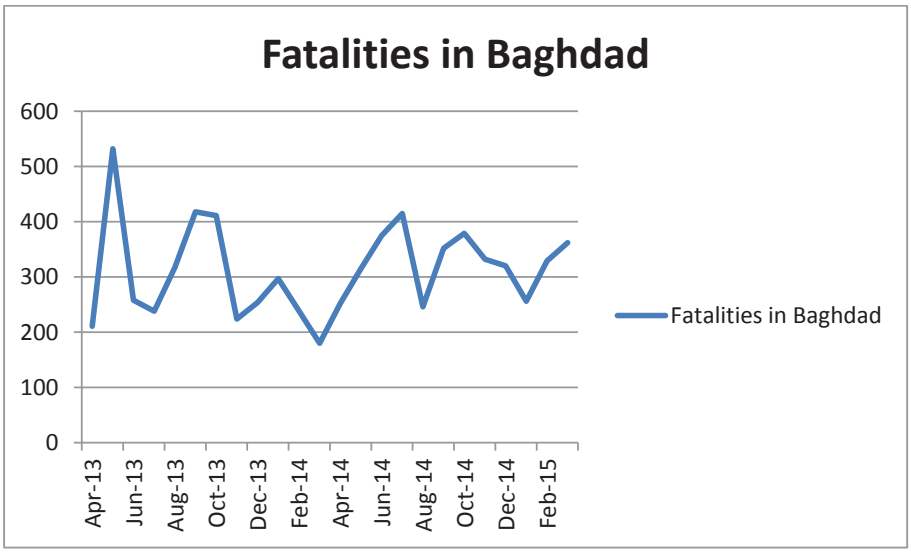
[57] Iraq Body Count, data derived from database, undated, https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/ date accessed 1 April 2015
[58] Iraq Body Count, Documented civilian deaths from violence, https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/ undated, accessed on 26 March 2015

January 2014	297	585	882
February 2014	239	551	790
March 2014	180	477	657
April 2014	252	581	833
May 2014	315	617	932
June 2014	375	715	1090
July 2014	415	620	1035
August 2014	246	611	857
September 2014	352	983	1335
October 2014	379	983	1362
November 2014	332	921	1253
December 2014	320	731	1051
Total for April to December 2014	**2986**	**6762**	**9748**
Total for 2014	**3702**	**8375**	**12077**
January 2015	256	758	1014
February 2015	329	875	1204
March 2015	362	928	1290

[59]

2.6.16 The following graph is based on the above UNAMI for fatalities:

[59] UU, Casualty figures, January 2014 to February 2015, each month's data released on 1st day of following month, http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=tag&tag=Casualty Figures&lang=en, accessed on 1 April 2015



2.6.17 The blog, Musings on Iraq, based on media reports, collated the following figures for security incidents in Baghdad:

	Security incidents
January 2014	222
February	185
March	207
April	180
May	192
June	181
July	220
August	172
September	189
October	152
November	177
December	201
January 2015	205
February	214
March	212*

* Upto 28 March 2015

[60] [61]

2.6.18 For information on trends in violence see Musings on Iraq, 2014: Deadliest Year in Iraq Since Civil War Period.[62]

[60] Musings on Iraq, Violence down in Iraq in February 2015, 2 March 2015, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/03/violence-down-in-iraq-in-february-2015.html, accessed on 1 April 2015

[61] Musings on Iraq, Charts On Violence In Iraq 2014 Part I - Provincial Statistics, 6 January 2015, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/charts-on-violence-in-iraq-2014-part-i.html, accessed on 31 March 2015

Security incidents in Baghdad

Improvised Explosive Device (IED) related attacks

2.6.19 Baghdad remained a centre of frequent mass casualty attacks, predominantly, although not exclusive in Shiite neighbourhoods.[63] According to the blogger Joel Wing, Baghdad had always been a target for insurgents in an attempt to stoke sectarian tensions and undermine the government. [64]

2.6.20 ISIL was responsible for repeated and deliberate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, including the use of suicide and car bomb attacks, across Iraq including Baghdad. [65] For example on 23 July 2014, ISIL claimed responsibility for an SVBIED attack in Baghdad that killed 28 civilians, including five police men in a Shia area of northwest Baghdad; whilst on 25 August ISIL claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing on a Shia mosque in New Baghdad, reportedly in retaliation for an attack on Sunni worshippers in Diyala province on 22 August.[66]

2.6.21 A report from the ISW noted the emergence of Suicide Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (SVESTS) attacks in June 2014, which suggested an adaption by ISIL from the more detectable SVBIED attacks, possibly in response to the increased Shia security presence in the capital.[67] Data compiled by the blogger Joel Wing reported a marked decline in IEDs throughout 2014, indicating a declining capability by ISIL to launch such attacks. Although the data did not specifically relate to Baghdad, the source recorded 91.6 car bombs per month over the period January to May, which fell to 53.1 car bombs from June to December and only 21 VBIEDs in December, the fewest since 2012. [68]

2.6.22 On 18 September 2014 ISIL launched a complex attack on Baghdad's Kadhmiyah neighbourhood in northern Baghdad, likely targeting the Adala Prison. The attack was foiled by ISF. The ISIL assault involved Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs), and Suicide Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (SVBIEDs), as well as mortar rounds likely fired from the northern Baghdad belts region. Elsewhere a VBIED attack targeted the Badr Organisation's offices in Baghdad. According to the ISW, the incident was the first complex, infantry-like assault on Baghdad by ISIL since the fall of Mosul in June.[69]

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[62] Musings on Iraq, 2014 Deadliest Year In Iraq Since Civil War Period, 6 January 2015, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/2014-deadliest-year-in-iraq-since-civil_6.html accessed on 20 March 2015

[63] UNHCR, UNHCR position on returns to Iraq', 27 October 2014, para 15 http://www.refworld.org/docid/544e4b3c4.html, date accessed: 20 January 2015

[64] Musings on Iraq, 2014 deadliest year in Iraq since civil war period', 6 January 2015, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/2014-deadliest-year-in-iraq-since-civil_6.html, date accessed: 20 January 2015

[65] UNHCR, UNHCR position on returns to Iraq', 27 October 2015, para 4, http://www.refworld.org/docid/544e4b3c4.html, date accessed: 20 January 2015

[66] OHCHR/UNAMI, 'Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 6 July to 10 September 2014', p.8, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_POC_Report_FINAL_6July_10September2014.pdf, date accessed: 20 January 2015

[67] Institute for the Study of War, 'ISIS Battle Plan for Baghdad', 27 June 2014, p.5, http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-battle-plan-baghdad, date accessed: 19 January 2015

[68] Musings on Iraq, 2014 deadliest year in Iraq since civil war period', 6 January 2015, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/2014-deadliest-year-in-iraq-since-civil_6.html, date accessed: 20 January 2015

[69] Institute for the Study of War, 'Warning Intelligence Update: ISIS attacks Baghdad', 18 September 2014, http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/warning-intelligence-update-isis-attacks-baghdad, date accessed: 19 January 2015

2.6.23 The Office for the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) and UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in a report covering events between 6 July and 10 September 2014, reported:

'Baghdad was particularly hard hit by IED attacks, but other areas of the country were not immune. Many are placed in public spaces directly targeting civilians or heedless of the impact on civilians. As with killings noted above, circumstantial information may suggest in general terms who may have been responsible, but in regard to the incidents reported below, the perpetrators are unknown, and no group claimed responsibility.

'On 15 July, two car bombs detonated almost simultaneously in al-Hay market in Sadr City (east Baghdad), killing at least three people and injuring 50 others. On 6 August, two car bombs hit Ur (east Baghdad) and Sadr City (east Baghdad) causing the death of seven civilians and the injury of 22 others in Ur and the death of six and the injury of 29 in Sadr city. One VBIED was detonated in the district of New Baghdad (south east Baghdad) killing six civilians and injuring 18 others. On 7 August, a suicide car bomber attacked a police check point in Abdul Muhsen al-Kadhmi square in Khadmiya (north Baghdad) leaving 13 killed and 25 injured. On 12 August, an attack with a vehicle laden with explosives close to Albu Shujaa Husseiniya inKarrada district (central Baghdad), not far from the house of the Prime Minister-designate, killed at least eight civilians and wounded 51 more. After that, angry residents attacked checkpoints in the area complaining that security forces had failed to prevent incidents. UNAMI/OHCHR also learned that a senior police officer was seriously injured by the protestors, who reportedly had thrown stones at him.

'IEDs were detonated in different part of the city, killing dozens of civilians. UNAMI has received various reports and documented such incidents throughout the country in particular in the Capital Baghdad. On 7 July, four IEDs detonated in different areas of the city, of which one near a playground in Nahrawan (southern Baghdad), two placed under civilian vehicles, and a suicide bomber detonating his explosives killed a minimum of five civilians and wounded 22 others. On 10-12 July, eight IEDs exploded in different areas of the city, of which two in local markets in al-Mada'in (south Baghdad) and Shaab (northeast Baghdad) districts, four placed under civilian vehicles and a vehicle rigged with explosives killed at a minimum six civilians and wounded 29 others. On 14 July, two car bombs detonated in central and southwest Baghdad, killing six civilians and wounding 18 others. A VBIED detonated later in the day in Bayaa (southwest Baghdad) killing three and wounding seven.'

'Sunni areas have not spared either. On 17 July, an IED exploded in a market in Taji (northern Baghdad) killing two civilians and wounding five others. On 4 August, an IED was detonated in the district of Ghazaliya (west Baghdad) causing one death and six injuries. On 13 August, a car bomb in al-Amil (central/western Baghdad) killed two and wounded seven. On 20 August, an improvised explosive device in Mahmoudiya (south Baghdad) killed one and wounded four more.

'On 10 September, two attacks in New Baghdad (eastern Baghdad), one with a vehicle laden with explosives and the other by an individual driving a vehicle rigged with explosives, killed at least 17 and wounded at least 60.' [70]

2.6.24 Jane's noted in January 2015 that:

'In Baghdad, property adjacent to religious, government, and security buildings are at highest risk of being temporarily seized during firefights with insurgents, while a sustained vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) campaign targeting Shia

[70] OHCHR/UNAMI, 'Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 6 July to 10 September 2014', p.22-23, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_POC_Report_FINAL_6July_10September2014.pdf, date accessed: 20 January 2015

neighbourhoods is also likely. Despite the Islamic State's aspirations to overrun the capital, the concentration of Shia militias and ongoing Coalition airstrikes will probably prevent this. Instead, insurgents are likely to increase the number of suicide and VBIED attacks and focus their efforts on targeting high-profile Shia religious shrines, such as Khathimiya in Baghdad and al-Askari mosque in Samarra. A successful attack on such shrines would significantly increase the risk of large-scale and widespread retaliatory attacks by Shia militias against Sunni communities. Such an event is likely to unite the Sunni against the federal government, a major insurgent objective.'

2.6.25 The UNAMI report on protection of civilians covering the period 11 September to 10 December 2014 stated that:

'Baghdad and other areas of the country continued to suffer from terrorist attacks - however, the perpetrators of many of these attacks remain unknown. ISIL claimed an attack on 3 November targeting Ashura pilgrims, announcing online that a suicide bomber had carried out the attack, driving a vehicle laden with explosives into Tunis, northern Baghdad, which is a largely Shi'a-inhabited area. Six civilians were killed and at least 13 were wounded.'[71]

2.6.26 The same report observed that:

'Explosions either directly targeting civilians or conducted irrespective of their presence, took place across the entire country. These attacks occurred in and around restaurants and cafes, public parks, market places, public transport, places of worship, public buildings and security check points. IEDs were employed in a variety of formats, including body-borne IEDs (BBIEDs), vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIEDs) and suicide vehicle-borne IEDs (SVBIEDs). Attacks impacted and targeted civilians of all sects and ethnicities, in neighborhoods across Iraq that were both homogenous and mixed.

'Baghdad saw the highest volume of attacks. During the reporting period, there were 258 IED attacks in the city. On 18 September, an unspecified IED targeted al-Adala prison in Kadhimiya district (northern Baghdad), reportedly killing at least 24 persons and wounding 90 others. A series of explosions continued through the city over a three day period between 18-20 September, with four VBIEDs and two IEDs killing at least 24 and wounding another 96 in Tobchi, Iskan, Karrada, Mahmoudiya, Yousufiya and Taji districts.

'Another wave of explosions struck a few days later between 22 and 24 September, when the city was hit by six IEDs and two VBIEDs in predominately Shi'a parts of the city. At least 18 people were killed and another 80 wounded. On 1 October, two IEDs were detonated in Awairij (southern Baghdad), one in Baya'a (southwestern Baghdad) and one in Diyala Bridge (southeastern Baghdad), killing at least seven civilians and wounding 34 more. On the same evening a VBIED struck New Baghdad (eastern Baghdad) killing at least 13 and wounding 47 more. On 11 October during a series of three VBIED attacks, one striking the Jekok area of Kadhimiya (northern Baghdad) killed at least 30 civilians and wounded at least 60 more. During this period, Kadhimiya was targeted three times within four days, including with another VBIED that killed at least 21 civilians and wounded 52 more.

'The city also saw several attacks on mosques during times of worship. On 19 October an attack by an individual wearing an explosive vest outside a Shi'a mosque in Harthiya (eastern Baghdad) killed at least 15 civilians and wounded 24 more, who were reportedly attending a funeral. On 20 October, another individual wearing a BBIED targeted worshippers leaving after noon prayers in Sinak (central Baghdad), killing two civilians and wounding eight more. A series of attacks also targeted pilgrims in Baghdad en route

[71] UNAMI, Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, p12, February 2015 http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=tag&tag=Human Rights&lang=en accessed on 31 March 2015

to and from Karbala to celebrate the religious holiday of Ashura between 2 and 5 November.

‘On 29 November, five IED attacks occurred in the districts of Baya’a, Sha'ab, Sheikh Omar, al-Amin and Mada’in. One IED was detonated in the morning in Baya’a (southwestern Baghdad) killing one civilian and injuring five others. Another IED was detonated inside a bus in Sha’ab (northeastern Baghdad) leading to the death of two civilians and the injury of six others. One IED was detonated in the morning in Sheikh Omar (central Baghdad) claiming the life of one civilian and injuring seven others. An IED detonated in al-Amin (east Baghdad) killing one civilian and injuring eight others. Another IED detonated in Mada’in (southern Baghdad) injuring two civilians.

‘On 1 December, three IED attacks occurred in the districts of Ur, Al-Amil and Nahrawan. One IED was detonated on a restaurant in Ur district (eastern Baghdad) leading to the death of one civilian and injuries to nine others. A second IED was detonated on a super market in al-Amil (southwestern Baghdad) leading to the death of one civilian and the injury of eight others. A third IED was detonated on a play hall in Nahrawan (southeastern Baghdad), killing three civilians and injuring eight others. On 2 December, three IED attacks hit different districts in Baghdad. On the morning, one IED was detonated in Doura (southern Baghdad) killing two civilians and injuring seven others. In the evening an IED was detonated inside a bus in Bab al-Sham, an industrial area (northeastern Baghdad) leading to the death of three civilians and the injury of six others. In the evening, one IED detonated inside a café in al-Amin (eastern Baghdad) killing one civilian and injuring six others.

‘On 3 December, five IED attacks hit different districts in Baghdad. One IED was detonated in the industrial area in Taji district (northern Baghdad) killing two civilians and injuring six others. An IED detonated in a public restaurant in Habibiyah district (east of Baghdad) killing three civilians and injuring 10 others. One IED detonated in Iskan district (northwestern Baghdad) killing two civilians and injuring five. An IED detonated in a wholesale grocery market in Amiriya district (western Baghdad) leading to the killing of two civilians and the injury of eight others. Another IED was placed under a minibus in Nahda district (eastern Baghdad, majority Shi'as) killing one civilian and injuring five others.

‘On the evening of 4 December, two vehicles rigged with explosives were detonated in Sadr city (east Baghdad): the first detonated in Oula Suq leading to the killing of nine civilians and the injury of 28 others while the second was detonated near Orozdi Traffic Lights, killing 12 persons and injuring 41.

‘On 8 December, seven IED attacks hit different districts in Baghdad. In the morning, one IED targeted a bakery in Furat (western Baghdad) causing the death of two civilians and the injury of five others. In the morning, one IED targeted civilians in a bazaar in Ur (eastern Baghdad) causing the death of one civilian and the injury of eight others. In the morning, one under vehicle IED killed a university professor in Suliakh (north Baghdad). At noon, one IED targeted civilians in a bazaar in Arab Jbour in Doura (southern Baghdad) causing the death of one civilian and the injury of two others. In the evening, one IED targeted civilians in a bazaar in Sadr city (east Baghdad) causing the death of one civilian and the injury of two others. In the evening, one IED was detonated in Sha’ab (northeastern Baghdad) causing the injury of five civilians. In the evening, one IED targeted pilgrims in Yousufiya (southern Baghdad) causing the death of two civilians and the injury of eight others.’[72]

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[72] UNAMI, Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, p24-25, February 2015 http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=tag&tag=Human Rights&lang=en accessed on 31 March 2015

Kidnappings, abductions and extra-judicial killings

2.6.27 There were cases of abductions, kidnappings and forced evictions in Baghdad carried out by armed groups affiliated to or supportive of government forces, as well clashes between ISF and non-state armed groups or between Shia armed groups. For example on 9 July the pro-Iranian Shiite group, the AAH, reportedly abducted civilians from the al-Mohandisseen area, Eastern Baghdad, who were taken to an unknown location.[73] On 22 July armed groups driving civilian vehicles without number plates and accompanied by ISF vehicles entered the majority Sunni area of Daria, in south east Baghdad, and threatened the residents, claiming they were affiliated to ISIL. After the incident reportedly 50 families left to relocate to Erbil and Sulaymaniyah.[74]

2.6.28 A statement issued by Sunni scholars in Baghdad reported that in several prominent Baghdad neighbourhoods Sunni populations had been forcibly driven out by government forces and Shiite militias.[75]

2.6.29 In September 2014, Amnesty International documented four Sunnis who were abducted and killed reportedly by Shia militias[76], and a further six individuals who were abducted and still missing at the time the report was written in October 2014.[77] In the same report, the Amnesty researcher quoted a member of AAH, on duty at a checkpoint north of Baghdad, unaware that he was speaking with a representative of Amnesty International:: '"if we catch 'those dogs' [Sunnis] coming down from the Tikrit area we execute them; in those areas they are all working with DA'ESH (IS). They come to Baghdad to commit terrorist crimes. So we have to stop them".'[78]

2.6.30 The UNAMI report covering the period July to September 2014 observed that:

'A number of abductions and kidnappings have also been carried out by armed groups affiliated to, aligned with, or supporting government forces' and reported one example

'On 9 July, members of AAH reportedly abducted some civilians in the al-Mohandisseen area, Palestine Street, eastern Baghdad, and took them to an unknown location. On 10 July, at least 23 farmers were abducted near a vegetable trading market in Balad District (south Salah al-Din). The farmers, who were said to be Arab Sunni from Yathrib sub-district had travelled to Balad to sell their products but were abducted by AAH. The fate of those abducted is unknown.'

2.6.31 The same report observed that

'There were a large number of assassinations and killings recorded from various parts of the country. Baghdad Governorate was particularly affected, where a large number of bodies, often unidentified, had been recovered on a daily basis. Many of the victims were

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[73] OHCHR/UNAMI, 'Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 6 July to 10 September 2014', p.20, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_POC_Report_FINAL_6July_10September2014.pdf, date accessed: 20 January 2015

[74] OHCHR/UNAMI, 'Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 6 July to 10 September 2014', p.21, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_POC_Report_FINAL_6July_10September2014.pdf, date accessed: 20 January 2015

[75] Rudaw, 'Group accuses Iraqi government of expelling Sunnis from Baghdad', 20 December 2014, http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/201220141, date accessed: 20 January 2015

[76] Amnesty International, Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq, p6-9, October 2014, http://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/absolute_impunity_iraq_report.pdf accessed on 30 March 2015

[77] Amnesty International, Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq, p15-16, October 2014, http://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/absolute_impunity_iraq_report.pdf accessed on 30 March 2015

[78] Amnesty International, 'Iraq: Absolute impunity: militia rule in Iraq', 14 October 2014, p.18, http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE14/015/2014/en/17cbb7ef-7ca4-4b5a-963e-661f256fddb0/mde140152014en.pdf, date accessed: 20 January 2015

found shot with their hands tied behind their back executed while a high proportion exhibited signs of having been tortured prior to death. A majority of these attacks appear to be of a sectarian nature.

'In July and August 2014, Iraqi police found the remains of a young man who had died of gunshot wounds in Husseiniya (northeast Baghdad). Similar cases were also reported in cities such as Sadr City, Kadhimiya, Zafaraniya , Shula, Bab-El sham, Abu Dsheer , al-Sadda, Al litafiya, Al-Ubaidi,Doura, Mahmoudiya, Suliakh and Taji, al-Dora, al-Ma'mil, al-Sh'ab, al-Baladiyat, al-Bayaa, al-Amil, Zayouna, al- Shaab, and al-Salikh.' [79]

2.6.32 The UNAMI report covering events between September and December 2014 stated:

'Assassinations and killings, including targeting of specific groups, were recorded in large numbers across the country…. Recovered bodies frequently exhibited gunshot wounds, mostly to the head, and were sometimes found blindfolded and/or with their hands and/or feet tied. Some also exhibited signs of ill treatment or torture… Baghdad continued to be most afflicted with killings by unknown perpetrators, with reports that the Medical Legal Institute in the capital receives on some days between 18 and 23 unidentified bodies; an increase from mid-July reports when it had been receiving around 15 unidentified bodies per day. UNAMI/OHCHR received reports of 124 incidents of unidentified bodies in Baghdad during the reporting period. On 3 October, police found the remains of 14 men who had died from gunshot wounds in Mashtal, Baladiyat, Sadr City, Sha'ab, Tarmiya and al-Utaifiya areas of the city [September to December 2014]. On 14 November 16 bodies were found in Husseiniyah. According to sources, the bodies allegedly belonged to members of a local militia. On 30 November, police found the remains of three bodies in the districts of E'lam and Saidiya. The body of a male was found in E'lam (southern Baghdad) – the victim had been shot. The bodies of two women were found in Saydiya (western Baghdad). Both had been stabbed.

'On 1 December, the police found the remains of two males who had died from gunshot wounds: one in the district of Ubaidi (eastern Baghdad) and the other in Fadhiliyah (eastern Baghdad). On 4 December, the police found the remains of one male bearing marks of torture and stab-wounds in Sadr district (east Baghdad). The police found the remains of another two males who had sustained gunshot wounds: one in Sh'ab district (northeast of Baghdad) and one in Ur (eastern Baghdad). Additionally, the police found the remains of a male who had died from gunshot wounds in Zafaraniyah (southern Baghdad).'[80]

2.6.33 For general background information on Baghdad see: IOM, Baghdad governorate profile, September 2014 Refer also to the Home Office report on 'Internal relocation (and technical obstacles)', 24 December 2014 and relevant sections on Baghdad

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Babil

Control of territory

2.6.34 The Institute for the Study of War, Control of Territory report, dated 12 March 2015, showed Babil's capital, Al-Hillah, to be under the control of the Iraqi Security Forces, but

[79] OHCHR/UNAMI, 'Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 6 July to 10 September 2014', p.22, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_POC_Report_FINAL_6July_10September2014.pdf, date accessed: 20 January 2015

[80] UNAMI, Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, p22, February 2015 http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=tag&tag=Human Rights&lang=en accessed on 31 March 2015

reported that Yusufiyah in the north of the governorate was an area that ISW was watching (because of a risk of conflict / or where the control of which may change).[81]

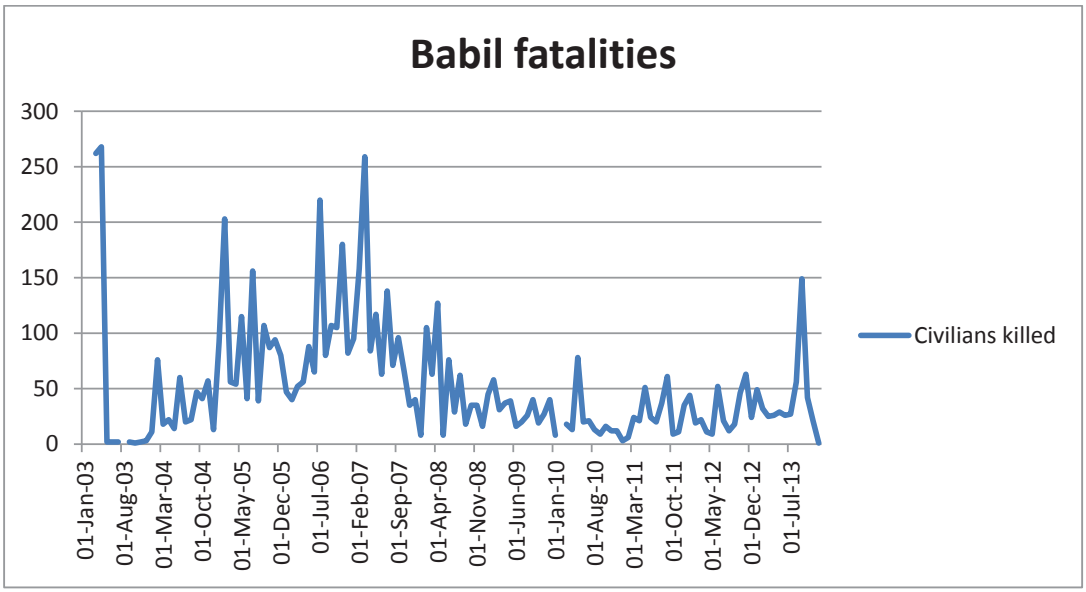
Fatality trends

2.6.35 The following table details population, fatality and displacement figures for Babil governorate (refer to the source footnoted for further details):

Population	1,820,673 (est for 2011) [82] [83]
Civilians killed	In 2012: 28 civilians killed per month In 2013: 40 civilians killed per month[84] Based on data recorded by the blogger Joel Wing, 1,507 persons were killed in 2014 in Babil, an average of 126 persons killed per month.[85] Based on IBC data between January 2003 and December 2013 a total of 6,739 civilians were killed in Babil governorate. The average number of civilians killed per month over this period was 52.6.
Number of persons displaced	As of December 2014, 5,774 internally displaced families (IDPs) were being hosted in 208 locations in Babil governorate[86] 1,389 families were displaced from Babil; just under half of whom, 664, had relocated elsewhere within the governorate; others had moved mainly to Baghdad and Kerbala. [87]

2.6.36 The following table, based on data obtained from the Iraq Body Count, shows fatality trends in Babil between March 2003 and December 2013:

[81] Institute for the Study of War, 'Control of Terrain in Iraq', 12 March 2015, http://www.understandingwar.org/iraq-blog 12 March 2015, date accessed: 31 March 2015
[82] Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology, population census data, 16 October 1997, accessed via Geohive, Iraq, http://www.geohive.com/cntry/iraq.aspx, date accessed: 26 January 2015
[83] Geohive, population estimate for 2011, 1,820,673, Iraq, http://www.geohive.com/cntry/iraq.aspx, date accessed: 26 January 2015
[84] Iraq Body Count database, data used between January 2003 and December 2013 (figures for December are incomplete), https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/, date accessed: 06 August 2014
[85] UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Civilian casualties, updated to December 2014, http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=tag&tag=Casualty%20Figures&Itemid=633&lang=en&limitstart=0, date accessed: 26 January 2015
[86] IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix, 'Iraq IDP crisis: January to December 25, 2014', http://iomiraq.net/file/1499/download?token=224aj8J0, date accessed: 26 January 2015
[87] IOM, 'Displacement Tracking Matrix', Datasets – 25 December 2014, http://iomiraq.net/file/1498/download?token=F38LG73i, date accessed: 26 January 2015



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Security incidents

2.6.37 Joel Wing in a blog entry entitled '2014 Deadliest Year In Iraq Since Civil War Period', dated 6 January 2015, noted that the area of Jurf al-Sakhr in Babil had militant bases which were used to launch attacks in the surrounding areas, but reported at year's end, the major ISIL base of Jurf al-Sakhr had been destroyed and the insurgents dispersed to the north of the governorate. [89] A later post dated 23 January 2015 observed that the loss of Jurf al-Sakhar had significantly improved security in southern Iraq, not least because the town was a major car bomb factory for ISIL.[90] However the source observed that a consequence of the military success had been significant levels civilian displacement from the area. The source, citing a parliamentarian from Babil, noted that civilians would be unable to return to area until the area had been cleared of thousands of explosives which could take up to 6 months. Other sources referred to indicated it be 8-10 months before civilians could return home.[91]

2.6.38 The OHCHR/UNAMI, 'Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 6 July to 10 September 2014' recorded several incidents in the Babil area:

' ... [O] n 9 July, two car bombs exploded in Imam District in Babil, around 50 km north of Hilla, killing two and wounding seven. On the same day, a car bomb exploded in Hilla near the Federal Court, with reports ranging from no to three casualties and burning of cars. On 18 August, Two car bombs hit Iskandariya on 18 August: one was detonated in front of Rafidaeen Bank, wounding three civilians; another one exploded in front of Iskan hospital, killing one civilian and wounding five others. On 25 August, two car bombs

[88] Iraq Body Count database, data used between January 2003 and December 2013 (figures for December are incomplete), https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/, date accessed: 06 August 2014
[89] Joel Wing, 'Musings on Iraq, '2014 Deadliest Year In Iraq Since Civil War Period', 6 January 2015, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/2014-deadliest-year-in-iraq-since-civil_6.html. date accessed: 8 January 2015
[90] Musings on Iraq, 'The clearing of Iraq's Jurf Al-Sakhr, Babil and its impact', 15 January 2015, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/the-clearing-of-iraqs-jurf-al-sakhr.html, date accessed: 20 January 2015
[91] Musings on Iraq, 'The clearing of Iraq's Jurf Al-Sakhr, Babil and its impact', 15 January 2015, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/the-clearing-of-iraqs-jurf-al-sakhr.html, date accessed: 20 January 2015

exploded in Hilla. One went off near al-Zahraa Shi'a mosque, the other one next to the Governorate building: three civilians were wounded and several cars were burnt.'[92]

2.6.39 The same source further recorded the occurrence of abductions in Babil by unknown perpetrators, noting on 6 September 2014, that more than 20 males were abducted in Iskandariya in Babil by unknown gunmen. The source provided no further details.[93]

2.6.40 News media recorded a car bomb attack in late December 2014 which occurred in Hittin Compound in Alexandra district, northern Babil. It was not known if there were injuries or fatalities.[94]

2.6.41 More data on incidents is available on the blog, Musings on Iraq.[95]

2.6.42 For general background information on Babil see: Joint Analysis and Policy Unit, Babil Governorate Profile, January 2015

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Southern governorates of Basrah, Najaf, Muthanna, Thi-Qar, Missan, Quadissiya and Wassit

Control of territory

2.6.43 The Institute for the Study of War, Control of Territory report, dated 12 March 2015, showed the southern governorates of Kerbala, Najaf, Muthanna, Basrah, Thi-Qar, Missan, Quadissiya and Wassit to be under the control of the Iraqi Security Forces.[96]

Fatality trends

2.6.44 The following table details population, fatality and displacement figures for governorates in the south (refer to the source footnoted for further details):

Population	6,719,414 [97] [98]
Civilians killed	Based on IBC data between January 2003 and December 2013 a total of 13,610 civilians were killed in the eight above-referenced southern governorates. The average number of civilians killed per month in the eight provinces over this period was 103.1.

[92] OHCHR/UNAMI, 'Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 6 July to 10 September 2014', p.23, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_POC_Report_FINAL_6July_10September2014.pdf, date accessed: 20 January 2015

[93] OHCHR/UNAMI, 'Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 6 July to 10 September 2014', p.24, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_POC_Report_FINAL_6July_10September2014.pdf, date accessed: 20 January 2015

[94] Shafaq, 'Car bomb explosion in a residential complex in Babil', 28 December 2014, http://www.english.shafaaq.com/index.php/security/12655-car-bomb-explosion-in-a-residential-complex-in-babil, date accessed: 3 February 2015

[95] Musings on Iraq, updated regularly, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/ accessed on 1 April 2015

[96] Institute for the Study of War, http://www.understandingwar.org/iraq-blog 12 March 2015, accessed 26 March 2015

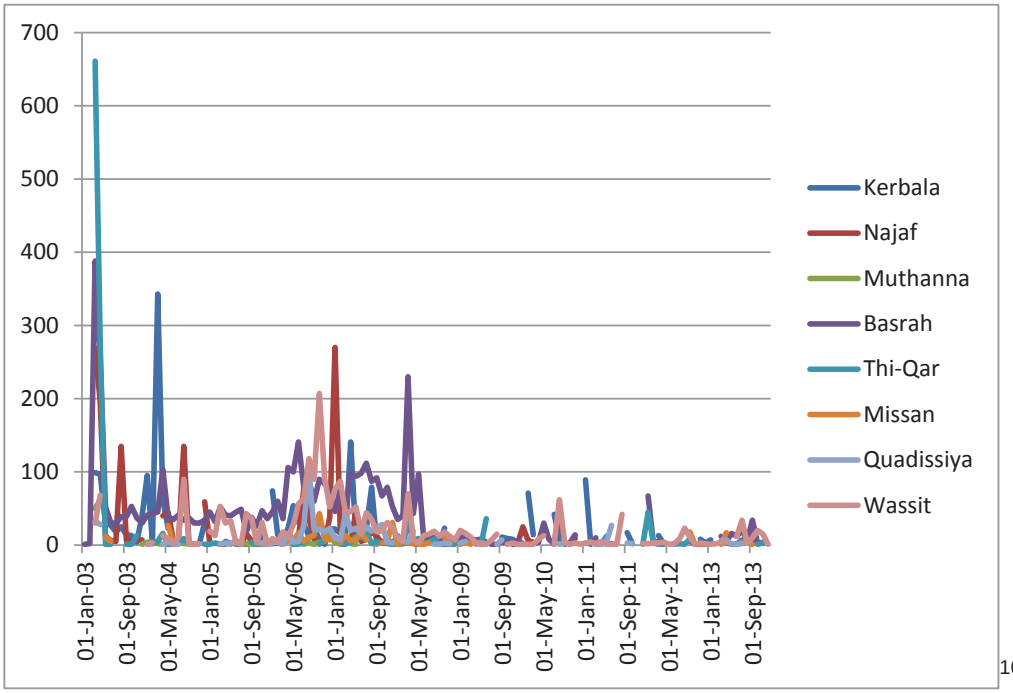
[97] Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology, population census data, 16 October 1997, accessed via Geohive, Iraq, http://www.geohive.com/cntry/iraq.aspx, date accessed: 26 January 2015

[98] Geohive, population estimate for 2011, 10,755,650, Iraq, http://www.geohive.com/cntry/iraq.aspx, date accessed: 26 January 2015

	Muthanna and Quadissiya recorded the lowest monthly rates between 2003 and 2013, with 5.5 and 6 persons killed per month. The highest was Basra with 40 civilians killed per month, followed by Kerbala, with 23 civilians killed each month. Recent trends, based on IBC data, showed for the eight southern governorates: In 2012: 28 civilians killed per month. In 2013: 29 civilians killed per month[99] [100] Based on data recorded by the blogger Joel Wing, 427 persons killed (includes military as well as civilians) in 2014 in the eight southern governorates of Kerbala, Najaf, Muthanna, Basrah, Thi-Qar, Missan, Quadissiya and Wassit, an average of 36 persons killed per month.[101]
Number of persons displaced	As of December 2014, 37,015 internally displaced families (IDPs) were being hosted in 630 locations in the governorates of Kerbala, Najaf, Basrah, Thi-Qar, Missan, Quadissiya and Wassit.[102] No data was available for Muthanna governorate. IOM's Data Tracking Matrix recorded no data for IDPs displaced from the southern governorates of Kerbala, Najaf, Basrah, Thi-Qar, Missan, Quadissiya and Wassit. [103]

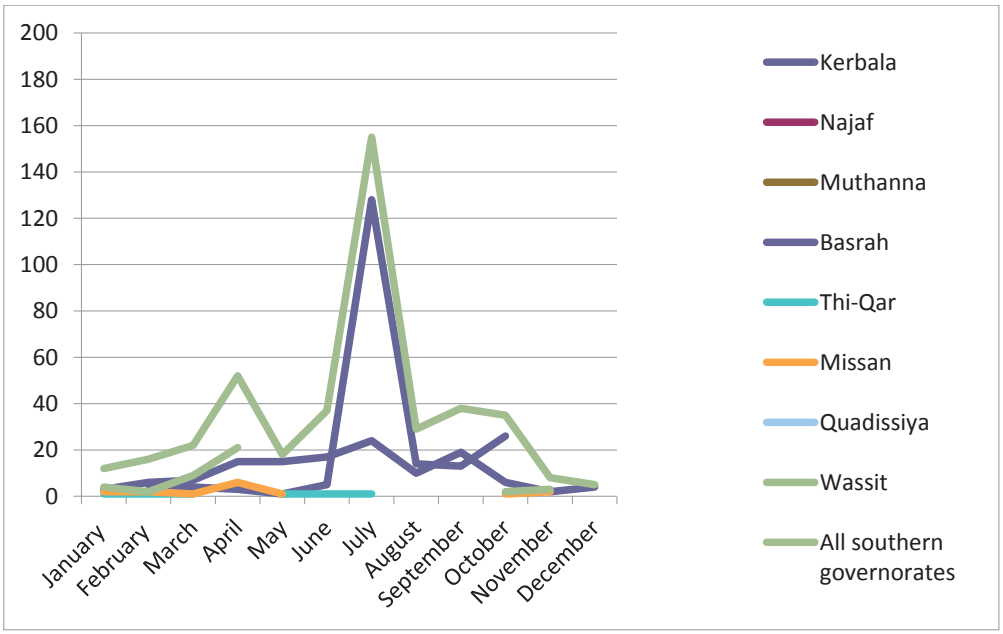
2.6.45 The following table shows fatalities in the governorates of Kerbala, Najaf, Muthanna, Basrah, Thi-Qar, Missan, Quadissiya and Wassit between 2003 and 2013, based on data recorded by Iraq Body Count. Again decision makers should be aware of the differences in data recording between sources:

[99] Iraq Body Count database, data used between January 2003 and December 2013 (figures for December are incomplete), https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/, dat accessed: 06 August 2014
[100] Whilst UNAMI and IBC both record civilian fatality data, the methodology applied will vary and should be considered in any like-for-like comparison. For further details refer direct to the sources.
[101] Musings on Iraq, Charts On Violence In Iraq 2014 Part I - Provincial Statistics, 6 January 2015,, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/charts-on-violence-in-iraq-2014-part-i.html date accessed: 26 January 2015
[102] IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix, 'Iraq IDP crisis: January to December 25, 2014', http://iomiraq.net/file/1499/download?token=224aj8J0, date accessed: 26 January 2015
[103] IOM, 'Displacement Tracking Matrix', Datasets – 25 December 2014, http://iomiraq.net/file/1498/download?token=F38LG73i, date accessed: 26 January 2015



[104]

2.6.46 The following table shows fatalities in the governorates of Kerbala, Najaf, Muthanna, Basrah, Thi-Qar, Missan, Quadissiya and Wassit over 2014, based on data recorded by Joel Wing on his blog, Musings on Iraq. Decision makers should be aware that the data recording used differs from that used by other sources such as the Iraq Body Count:



[105]

Security incidents

[104] Iraq Body Count, data extracted from the database, undated, https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/, accessed on 26 January 2015

[105] Musings on Iraq, Charts On Violence In Iraq 2014 Part I - Provincial Statistics, 6 January 2015 http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/charts-on-violence-in-iraq-2014-part-i.html, accessed on 26 January 2015

2.6.47 Data publicly reported by the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) only referred to governorates significantly affected by violence. These were usually contested areas in northern and central Iraq, including Baghdad.[106] The UNHCR's position on returns paper, dated October 2014, confirmed that the current conflict in Iraq was largely concentrated in central and northern governorates, including Baghdad and Babil. However the source further observed: 'The southern governorates also continue to see security incidents, including in the form of car bomb attacks, as well as targeted killings/kidnappings and sectarian reprisal attacks against individuals, including members of political parties, religious and tribal figures, government employees, and professionals.'[107]

2.6.48 In early July intra-Shiite tensions in Karbala lead to violence when the arrest of anti-government Shia cleric Mahmoud al-Sarkhi sparked clashes between his followers and Iraqi security forces, killing up to 45 people. The arrest came days after Sarkhi published a letter criticising [Grand Ayatollah] Sistani's decree for Iraqis to fight alongside the ISF against Sunni insurgents (Iraq Business News, 8 July 2014).[108] According to Joel Wing, the Shiite insurgency affected both Karbala and Quadissiya governorates, leading to at least 160 fatalities according to press reports.[109]

2.6.49 The OHCHR/UNAMI, 'Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 6 July to 10 September 2014' confirmed that in July UNAMI human rights officers received various credible reports of the unlawful killing of civilians in a number of locations, including Basra. Further details were not provided in the UNAMI report.[110] The same source also noted that: '[r]eports were received that on 13 July, five Sunni men, aged between 18 and 19, were kidnapped in Abu al-Khaseeb district in Basra.'[111] Additionally UNAMI reported:

'On 12 August, four young men with covered faces forced their way into a house in a residential neighbourhood of Abu Khaseeb District, Basra governorate, where they shot a 38 year old man twice in the shoulder, before cutting off his head. The victim lived with his mother, his wife and his two young daughters, all of whom were in the house at the time. Local people believe the only reason for the killing was because he was Sunni. He worked as an engineer for an oil company and his family had a good reputation in the neighbourhood, enjoying cordial relations with the community. At the time of the killing there was an army checkpoint in a nearby street, but the soldier posted did not respond to the sound of gunfire. Following the killing a local man carried the victim's body through the checkpoint and informed the soldier present about what had happened, but he again failed to respond. The police were informed and later told UNAMI/OHCHR that they were investigating.'[112]

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[106] UNAMI, Archived casualty figures, http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=category&id=159:civilian-casualties&Itemid=633&lang=en, date accessed: 20 January 2015
[107] UNHCR, UNHCR position on returns to Iraq', 27 October 2015, p.6, http://www.refworld.org/docid/544e4b3c4.html, date accessed: 20 January 2015
[108] Iraq Business News, 'Weekly Security Update, 1 – 7 July 2014', http://www.iraq-businessnews.com/2014/07/08/weekly-security-update-01-07-july/, date accessed: 3 February 2015
[109] Musings on Iraq, 'July 2014 over 5,000
[110] OHCHR/UNAMI, 'Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 6 July to 10 September 2014', p.22, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_POC_Report_FINAL_6July_10September2014.pdf, date accessed: 20 January 2015
[111] OHCHR/UNAMI, 'Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 6 July to 10 September 2014', p.24, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_POC_Report_FINAL_6July_10September2014.pdf, date accessed: 20 January 2015
[112] OHCHR/UNAMI, 'Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 6 July to 10 September 2014', p.24, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_POC_Report_FINAL_6July_10September2014.pdf, date accessed: 20 January 2015

2.6.50 On 25 August 2014, in Karbala, 9 persons were killed and 25 injured in three apparently coordinated bomb attacks in the city. Following the explosions, local authorities closed all roads leading to the city centre (UNAMI, Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 6 July to 10 September 2014).[113]

2.6.51 The UNAMI report covering events between 11 September and 10 December 2014, observed that:

'UNAMI/OHCHR continued to receive reports of abductions carried out by armed groups affiliated to, aligned with, or supporting government forces… UNAMI/OHCHR also continued to receive reports from Basra of abductions believed to stem from the activities of militias active in the area. On 9 September, a Kurdish businesswoman was abducted in central Basra. On 20 October, the Chief of Police in Baghdad announced that the police had facilitated her release. Media reports, however, indicated that the woman escaped from a house in Baghdad where she had been taken. Some media coverage attributed the abduction to the AAH, although there was no evidence corroborating this allegation. UNAMI/OHCHR confirmed the businesswoman's escape with officials and other sources, but these sources were reluctant to attribute responsibility for the abduction.

'On 8 October, three members of the Sunni community were abducted in and around Basra in public places during daylight hours, in front of witnesses, and in one case in close proximity to police checkpoints. Two of the victims were later released, but expressed reluctance to comment on their experience for fear of retaliation. Media and local sources alleged that militias had carried out the abductions. In response to the incidents, in a 14 October press conference the Governor of Basra and his security chiefs claimed that the abductions were criminally motivated and announced the creation of a "High Security Committee to Follow Up on Abduction Incidents." Security chiefs announced that officers would be assigned to the committee to investigate abduction cases and to take steps to prevent further incidents. At time of writing, the fate of the third abductee remained unknown. Subsequent to the Governor's establishment of the High Security Committee, four brothers were abducted from their house in Abu al-Khaseeb district by unidentified gunmen. According to community sources, the gunmen arrived using a four-vehicle convoy in the early hours of 14 November and claimed that they were from the Office of the Prime Minister. Community sources stated that a militia group that suspected the brothers to be supporters or sympathizers of ISIL was responsible for the abduction. Sources later confirmed that all four brothers were freed without payment of a ransom.'[114]

2.6.52 The same report also stated:

'Basra has also experienced a significant number of abductions by unknown perpetrators. On 11 September, four masked gunmen abducted a doctor from al-Qurna district, north of Basra. On 13 September, doctors working in private clinics in al-Qurna district reportedly suspended their work and held a demonstration to condemn the abduction and what they claim are similar attacks against doctors. In the evening of the same day, the doctor was released after tribal elders allegedly appealed to the abductors. No ransom was reportedly paid to secure the doctor's release.

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[113] OHCHR/UNAMI, 'Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 6 July to 10 September 2014', p.23, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_POC_Report_FINAL_6July_10September2014.pdf, date accessed: 20 January 2015

[114] UNAMI, Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, p21, February 2015 http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=tag&tag=Human Rights&lang=en accessed on 31 March 2015

'On 11 September, three gunmen in military uniforms abducted the Deputy Dean of Shatt al-Arab College, near al-Fayha Hospital in Basra city center. The Police Chief in Basra announced to the media that on 13 September, his forces raided a safe house located in the marshlands, north of Basra, and rescued the victim. No ransom was allegedly paid to the abductors, who avoided capture. On 1 November, seven masked gunmen abducted a 50-year old male member of the Sunni community from his house in Abu al-Khaseeb district, Basra. His abductors used a white pick-up type vehicle without registration number and took him to an unknown destination.'[115]

2.6.53 According to Joel Wing's blog, Musings on Iraq, in 2014 Basra had the sixth most number of attacks in Iraq (119). The source commented that whilst ISIL launched some car bomb attacks in the governorate, there was a lot of other violence carried out by gangs and militias.[116]

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Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Erbil, Dahuk and Sulamaniyah governorates

Control of territory

2.6.54 The Institute for the Study of War, Control of Territory report, dated 12 March 2015, showed Erbil to be under the control of Kurdish pesh merga forces.[117] The governorates of Dahuk or Sulymaniyah were not listed as an area of potential conflict or territory the ISW was watching; the website of the Kurdistan Regional Government referred to KRI as comprising the governorates of Erbil, Sulymaniyah and Dahuk.[118]

Fatality trends

2.6.55 The following table details population, fatality and displacement figures for KRG governorates (refer to the source footnoted for further details):

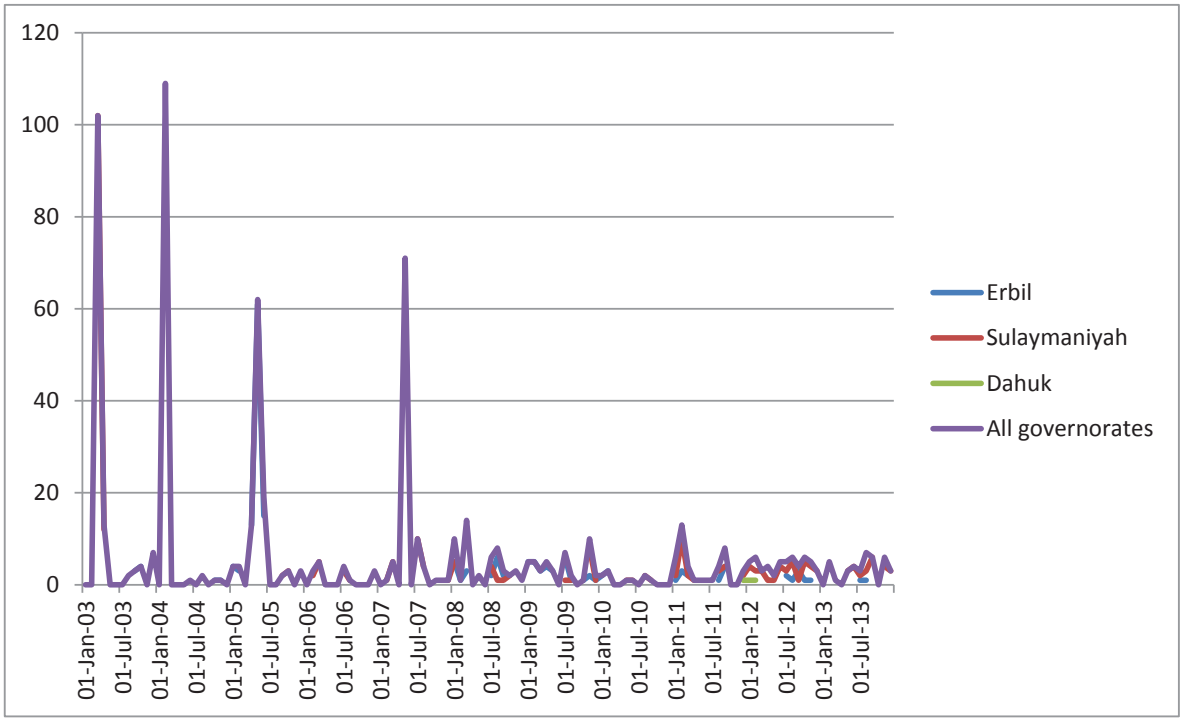
Population	2,861,701 [119] [120]
Civilians killed	Based on IBC data between January 2003 and December 2013 a total of 702 civilians were killed in KRI (Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dahuk governorates). The average number of civilians killed per month over this period was 5.3. Recent trends, based on IBC data, showed for the governorate:

[115] UNAMI, Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, p26, February 2015 http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=tag&tag=Human Rights&lang=en accessed on 31 March 2015
[116] Joel Wing, 'Musings on Iraq, '2014 Deadliest Year In Iraq Since Civil War Period', 6 January 2015, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/2014-deadliest-year-in-iraq-since-civil_6.html. date accessed: 8 January 2015
[117] Institute of the Study of War, Control of Terrain in Iraq, 12 March 2105, http://www.understandingwar.org/iraq-blog, accessed 26 March 2015
[118] KRG, Geography, undated, http://www.gov.krd/p/page.aspx?l=12&s=050000&r=303&p=213, date accessed: 10 February 2015
[119] Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology, population census data, 16 October 1997, accessed via Geohive, Iraq, http://www.geohive.com/cntry/iraq.aspx, date accessed: 26 January 2015
[120] Geohive, population estimate for 2011, 4,620,201, Iraq, http://www.geohive.com/cntry/iraq.aspx, date accessed: 26 January 2015

	In 2012: 4.5 civilians killed per month In 2013: 3.1 civilians killed per month[121] [122] Based on data recorded by the blogger Joel Wing, 10 persons were killed in 2014 in Erbil governorate, an average of 0.8 persons killed per month. The source did not list Dahuk or Sulaymaniyah.[123]
Number of persons displaced	As of December 2014, 133,082 IDP families were being hosted in 303 locations across the three KRI governorates of Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dahuk.[124] 4,466 families were displaced from Erbil governorate, the vast majority of whom (4,451) had relocated elsewhere in Erbil governorate. There were no figures available for displacement from Sulaymaniyah or Dahuk governorates. [125]

2.6.56 The following table, based on data obtained from the Iraq Body Count, shows fatality trends in KRI (Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dahuk) between January 2003 and December 2013:

[121] Iraq Body Count database, data used between January 2003 and December 2013 (figures for December are incomplete), https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/, dat accessed: 06 August 2014
[122] Whilst UNAMI and IBC both record civilian fatality data, the methodology applied will vary and should be considered in any like-for-like comparison. For further details refer direct to the sources.
[123] UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Civilian casualties, updated to December 2014, http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=tag&tag=Casualty%20Figures&Itemid=633&lang=en&limitstart=0, date accessed: 26 January 2015
[124] IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix, 'Iraq IDP crisis: January to December 25, 2014', http://iomiraq.net/file/1499/download?token=224aj8J0, date accessed: 26 January 2015
[125] IOM, 'Displacement Tracking Matrix', Datasets – 25 December 2014, http://iomiraq.net/file/1498/download?token=F38LG73i, date accessed: 26 January 2015



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Security incidents

2.6.57 Data publicly reported by the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) only referred to governorates significantly affected by violence. These were usually contested areas in northern and central Iraq (not the KRI governorates), including Baghdad.[127]

2.6.58 The UNHCR commented in October 2014 that the security situation in KRI remained relatively stable, with security forces on high alert, imposing strict security protocols to prevent ISIL and affiliated groups from launching attacks in the region.[128] However a mass casualty attack in Erbil governorate did occur in 2014. On 19 November 10 persons were killed in an attack in Erbil[129] when a vehicle loaded with explosives tried to enter the Erbil governorate building in Erbil city, near the Citadel.[130] The casualties included security guards and civilians.[131] According to sources cited the suicide bomber detonated the explosives as security forces shot him before he could enter the building.[132] ISIL later assumed responsibility for the attack.[133]

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[126] Iraq Body Count database, data used between January 2003 and December 2013 (figures for December are incomplete), https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/, date accessed: 06 August 2014
[127] UNAMI, Archived casualty figures, http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=category&id=159:civilian-casualties&Itemid=633&lang=en, date accessed: 20 January 2015
[128] UNHCR, UNHCR position on returns to Iraq', 27 October 2015, p.6, http://www.refworld.org/docid/544e4b3c4.html, date accessed: 20 January 2015
[129] Joel Wing, 'Musings on Iraq, '2014 Deadliest Year In Iraq Since Civil War Period', 6 January 2015, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/2014-deadliest-year-in-iraq-since-civil_6.html. date accessed: 8 January 2015
[130] Al Jazeera, 'Suicide car bomb attack hits Iraq's Erbil', 19 November 2014, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/11/deadly-car-bomb-hits-iraq-erbil-2014111992353562885.html, date accessed:10 February 2015
[131] KurdishGlobe.net, 'Kurdistan Security Council issues statement on Erbil attack', 24 November 2014, http://www.kurdishglobe.net/article/9CB57276318BEA902D73BA947EB73780/Kurdistan-Security-Council-issues-statement-on-Erbil-attack.html, date accessed: 10 February 2015
[132] See: Human Rights Watch, 'Iraq: Spate of Attacks Terrorize Civilians', http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/11/21/iraq-spate-attacks-terrorize-civilians, date accessed: 20 January 2015 and KurdishGlobe.net, 'Kurdistan Security

2.6.59 The Kurdistan Regional Government's Security Council said in a statement released on the same day, (19 November 2014) that the influx into the region of more than 1 million people fleeing violence elsewhere in Iraq threatened security, and stated that "terrorists" were taking advantage of the influx to infiltrate.[134]

2.6.60 ISIL threatened KRI territory into mid-2014. On 6 August an ISIL assault saw the Islamic group advance north into the Ninewa Plains and Shirkhan District as far as Makhmour on the southern edge of Erbil governorate.[135] However by year's end Kurdish forces had been able to launch an effective counter-offensive, making advances into ISIL held territories from northern Ninewa into Sinjar and also clearing the north east of Diyala province in Jalawla and Sadiya.[136] The latest ISW control of territory map showed Sinjar and Bashiqa, Qaraqoush, Tilkif and Wana in Ninewa governorates as areas contested. Several territories in Diyala and Kirkuk governorates were listed as Pesh merga controlled.[137]

2.6.61 For general background on the KRI governorates see:

- IOM, Erbil governorate profile, September 2014
- IOM, Dahuk governorate profile, September 2014
- IOM Sulaymaniyah governorate profile, September 2014

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Council issues statement on Erbil attack', 24 November 2014, http://www.kurdishglobe.net/article/9CB57276318BEA902D73BA947EB73780/Kurdistan-Security-Council-issues-statement-on-Erbil-attack.html, date accessed: 9 February 2015

[133] KurdishGlobe.net, 'Kurdistan Security Council issues statement on Erbil attack', 24 November 2014, http://www.kurdishglobe.net/article/9CB57276318BEA902D73BA947EB73780/Kurdistan-Security-Council-issues-statement-on-Erbil-attack.html, date accessed: 9 February 2015

[134] Human Rights Watch, 'Iraq: Spate of Attacks Terrorize Civilians', http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/11/21/iraq-spate-attacks-terrorize-civilians, date accessed: 20 January 2015

[135] OHCHR/UNAMI, 'Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 6 July to 10 September 2014', p.3, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_POC_Report_FINAL_6July_10September2014.pdf, date accessed: 20 January 2015

[136] Joel Wing, 'Musings on Iraq, '2014 Deadliest Year In Iraq Since Civil War Period', 6 January 2015, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/2014-deadliest-year-in-iraq-since-civil_6.html. date accessed: 8 January 2015

[137] Institute for the Study of War, 'Control of Terrain in Iraq', 2 July 2014, http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/control-terrain-iraq-july-2-2014, date accessed: 3 July 2014

Change Record

Version	Date	Change References
1.0	24 April 2015	First version .

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