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- Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD).

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- Czech Republic, Department for Asylum and Migration Policy
- Greece, Greek Asylum Service (GAS), General Secretariat for Migration Policy
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The review carried out by the mentioned departments, experts or organisations contributes to the overall quality of the report, but it does not necessarily imply their formal endorsement of the final report, which is the full responsibility of EUAA.





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Disclaimer

This report was written according to the [EUAA COI Report Methodology \(2023\)](#). The report is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced.

The information contained in this report has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care within a limited timeframe. However, this document does not claim to be exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Any event taking place after the finalisation of this report is not included. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the introduction.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular application for international protection. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

‘Refugee’, ‘risk’ and similar terminology are used as generic terminology and not in the legal sense as applied in the EU Asylum Acquis, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

Neither EUAA nor any person acting on its behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained in this report.

On 19 January 2022, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) became the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). All references to EASO, EASO products and bodies should be understood as references to the EUAA.

The drafting of this report was finalised on 15 May 2024. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this report. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the methodology section of the Introduction.



Glossary and abbreviations

Term	Definition
AAH	Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq (The League of the Righteous). AAH was designated by the US as a terrorist organisation on 3 January 2020
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
Asayish	Internal security and intelligence services of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq
Badr Organisation	Iranian-backed Shia militia that is part of the PMF
CHA	Confirmed Hazardous Areas (Term used by Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor)
CSO	Central Statistical Organization
CTS	Counter Terrorism Services
DTM	IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War
FP	Federal Police
Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi	Arabic term for Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) or Popular Mobilization Units (PMU). Sometimes only referred to as Hashd.
HAN	Harakat Al-Nujab (Movement of the Party of God's Noble Ones). HaN was designated by the US as a terrorist organisation on 5 March 2019
IED	Improvised Explosive Device





Term	Definition
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps
IRGC – QF	Quds Forces of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps of Iran
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant; also known as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Islamic State (IS), or Daesh
ISW	Institute for the Study of War
JOC	Joint Operations Command
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KDPI	Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, also known as PDKI – Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, an Iranian Kurdish opposition group operating from Iraq
KH	Kata'ib Hezbollah (Battalions of the Party of God); Iranian-backed Shia militia that is part of the Popular Mobilisation Units. KH was designated by the US as a terrorist organisation on 2 July 2009.
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
KSS	Kata'ib Sayyid Al-Shuhada
Mol	Ministry of Interior
MOPA	Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs
<i>Mukhtar</i>	Local community leader
Peshmerga	Military forces of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq Kurdistan





Term	Definition
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party. The PKK is on the European Union's list of designated groups which have been involved in terrorism, as well as being listed as a terrorist organisation by Türkiye, the United States, and Australia.
PMF	Popular Mobilization Forces or Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), also called <i>Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi</i> in Arabic
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
USDOD	US Department of Defense
USDOS	US Department of State
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
YBS	Sinjar Resistance Units



Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide relevant information for the assessment of applications for international protection, including refugee status and subsidiary protection, and in particular for use in updating EUAA's country guidance document on Iraq.

In order to support the assessment of the application of Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive on the existence of 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, the security situation report examines the type of armed conflicts taking place in the territory, the nature of the violence and presence of armed actors in different areas, and the impact on civilians, for example in terms of casualties/fatalities and conflict-linked displacement.

The report covers the period February 2023 – March 2024, and provides an update of the EUAA COI report: [Iraq - Security situation \(January 2022\)](#). The report should be read in conjunction with the EUAA COI report: [Iraq - Country focus \(May 2024\)](#).

Methodology

This report was jointly drafted by EUAA and ACCORD and reviewed by EUAA and national COI departments in EU+ countries,¹ as mentioned in the [Acknowledgements](#) section.

This report is produced in line with the [EUAA COI Report Methodology \(2023\)](#)² and the [EUAA COI Writing and Referencing Style Guide \(2023\)](#).³ It is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced.

Defining the terms of reference

The terms of reference (ToR) of this report were defined by EUAA based on discussions held and input received from COI experts in the EUAA COI specialist network on Iraq and from policy experts in EU+ countries appointed to EUAA Country Guidance network. The ToR also builds on previous EUAA COI reports on Iraq covering the same topics. The Terms of Reference for this report can be found in [Annex 2: Terms of Reference](#) of this report.

Collecting information

The information gathered is a result of research using public, specialised paper-based and electronic sources until 24 April 2024. Some limited additional information was added during the finalisation of this report in response to feedback received during the quality control process, until 15 May 2024.

¹ EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland.

² EUAA, EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology, February 2023, [url](#)

³ EUAA, Writing and Referencing Guide for EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) Reports, February 2023, [url](#)



Quality control

To ensure that the authors respected the EUAA COI Report Methodology and that the Terms of Reference were comprehensively addressed, a review was carried out by COI specialists from the countries and organisations listed as reviewers in the [Acknowledgements](#) section. All comments made by the reviewers were taken into consideration and most of them were implemented in the final draft of this report, which was finalised on 15 May 2024. EUAA also performed the final quality review and editing of the text.

Sources

In accordance with EUAA COI methodology, a range of different published documentary sources have been consulted on relevant topics for this report. These include: COI reports by governments, information from civil society, advocacy groups, humanitarian organisations and NGOs, international and NGO human rights reports, reports produced by various bodies of the United Nations, Iraqi and regionally-based media, academic publications and think tank reports, and specialised sources covering Iraq.

Sources on security incidents

For data on violent incidents, publicly available curated datasets from the organisation [Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project \(ACLED\)](#) have been used. ACLED is a project collecting, analysing and mapping information on crisis and conflict in Africa, South and South-east Asia and Middle East and provides datasets on conflict incidents. It collects data on violent incidents in Iraq, coding each incident with the time and place, type of violent incident, the parties involved and the number of fatalities. The information is collected in a database that is openly accessible, searchable and kept continuously up to date. The data primarily come from secondary sources such as traditional media reports, but also from reports by international institutions and non-governmental organisations, targeted new media platforms, and data provided by local partners of ACLED.⁴ On Iraq, ACLED incorporates data from a number of partners, including Aid Worker Security Database, Airwars, Front Line Defenders, Liveuamap, and the Center for Civilians in Conflict.⁵

ACLED codes security incidents as follows:

- **Battles:** violent clashes between at least two armed groups. Battles can occur between armed and organised state, non-state, and external groups, and in any combination therein. The following sub-event types fall under the ‘Battles’ event category and are classified based on whether or not the battle results in a territorial exchange: ‘armed clash’, ‘government regains territory’, and ‘non-state actor overtakes territory’.
- **Violence against civilians:** violent events where an organised armed group deliberately inflicts violence upon unarmed non-combatants. It includes violent attacks on unarmed civilians such as sexual violence, attacks, abduction/forced disappearance.

⁴ ACLED, Methodology, April 2019, [url](#) ACLED, FAQs: ACLED Sourcing Methodology, March 2023, [url](#)

⁵ ACLED, Research & Local Data Collection Partners, nd., [url](#)



- **Explosions/remote violence:** events where an explosion, bomb or other explosive device were used to engage in conflict. They include one-sided violent events in which the tool for engaging in conflict creates asymmetry by taking away the ability of the targets to engage or defend themselves and their location. They include air/drone strikes, suicide bombs, shelling/artillery/missile attacks, remote explosive/landmine/IEDs, grenades, chemical weapons.
- **Riots:** are a violent demonstration, often involving a spontaneous action by unorganised, unaffiliated members of society. They include violent demonstrations and mob violence.
- **Protests:** public demonstration in which the participants do not engage in violence, though violence may be used against them. They include peaceful protests, protests with intervention, excessive force against protesters.
- **Strategic developments:** information regarding the activities of violent groups that is not itself recorded as political violence, yet may trigger future events or contribute to political dynamics within and across states. It includes agreements, change to group/activity, non-violent transfer of territory, arrests.⁶

For the purpose of this report only the following type of events were included in the analysis: battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians. Security incidents numbers and associated graphs/maps at country and governorate level are based on a publicly available ACLED dataset for Middle East.⁷

Additionally, ACLED codes actors involved in security incidents as follows: Actor1 is the 'named actor involved in the event' and Actor2 is the 'named actor involved in the event', while "[i]n most cases, an event requires two actors, noted in columns 'ACTOR1' and 'ACTOR2'". However, event types 'Explosions/Remote violence', 'Riots', 'Protests', and 'Strategic developments' can include 'one-sided events'.⁸ The ACLED coding of Actor1 and Actor2 does not necessarily indicate that one is the aggressor (e.g. Actor1) and the other one (e.g. Actor2) the target or victim.⁹ When focusing on the involvement of specific actors within certain regions, the drafters based their analysis on all those incidents, where ACLED coded the relevant actor either as 'Actor1' or as 'Actor2'. This approach aims to illustrate the general level of involvement of the respective actors in the conflict without distinguishing between Actor1 and Actor2, as these categories, according to ACLED's methodology, do not indicate any differentiation in terms of content/semantics.

Potential limits for COI use of ACLED data include:

- Data primarily come from secondary sources such as media reports. Secondary sources used by ACLED are of variable quality, may be politically biased, and may lack comprehensiveness.
- Certain secondary sources might be overrepresented in ACLED datasets covering security incidents in a specific country/province.
- Lack of reporting or underreporting for specific countries/provinces can occur.

⁶ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 2023, [url](#), pp. 10-20

⁷ ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (29 March 2024), [url](#)

⁸ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 2023, [url](#), p. 22

⁹ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 2023, [url](#), p. 4



- Geographical precision of security incidents is variable: the provincial capital will represent the region if no further precisions are available and may be over-represented.

To mitigate these challenges and limitations, ACLED data on security incidents has been corroborated/contrasted with information from other sources which were available over the reference period.

Sources on civilian casualties

The main source on civilian casualties and civilians killed in Iraq used in this report is the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). UNAMI figures/data on casualties (killed and injured) were received from UNAMI-HRO (Human rights Office) upon request. UNAMI no longer provides publicly available casualty figures for Iraq. The number of incidents provided by UNAMI-HRO were only those armed conflict-related incidents, which had directly impacted on civilians (causing civilian casualties) and on the civilian nature of property and protected areas (such as civilian houses, cropland, schools, health facilities and mosque).¹⁰ UNAMI-HRO verifies every single incident with at least three independent sources of information. These sources include victims, family members of victims, witnesses, local tribal elders and Sheikhs, local journalists, local civilian authorities (including mayors and district administrators), local health facilities and health professionals and security officials (primarily local police) who witnessed or have knowledge of the incident.¹¹

Additionally, data on civilian deaths collected by the [Uppsala Conflict Data Program \(UCDP\)](#) has been also included. The UCDP is a 'data collection project for civil war'.¹² The UCDP provided EUAA with a Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) covering the reference period of the report. The UCDP's methodology is explained on its website as well as its GED Codebook.¹³ The unit of analysis of the UCDP is the 'event'¹⁴ which is defined as '[a]n incident where armed force was used by an organised actor against another organised actor, or against civilians, resulting in at least 1 direct death at a specific location and a specific date'.¹⁵ This leads, among other things, to 'seemingly low estimates' because 'a number of factors can preclude a potential conflict event from inclusion in the UCDP GED', for example, unclear actors or uncertainty about whether fatalities occurred.¹⁶ The UCDP provides three estimates for fatalities for each event – a low estimate, a best estimate, and a high estimate. In addition, the UCDP provides an estimate of the number of civilian deaths.¹⁷ According to the UCDP, 'it is quite likely that there are more fatalities than given in the best estimate, but it is very unlikely that there are fewer'.¹⁸

¹⁰ UNAMI, email to EASO, 11 November 2021

¹¹ UNAMI, email to EASO, 11 November 2021

¹² UCDP, About UCDP, n.d., [url](#)

¹³ UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#); UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁴ UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁵ UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁶ UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁷ UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, [url](#), pp. 5, 11, 24

¹⁸ UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#)



The stricter definition of an event of the UCDP excludes violent incidents that are recorded by ACLED. This definition includes ACLED's option to assign violent events to 'unidentified armed groups'. The difference in definitions is one explanatory factor of why the number of events recorded by ACLED can be significantly higher than the number recorded by the UCDP.¹⁹ In this report, the UCDP data has been used to contrast ACLED data and to provide figures on civilian deaths. To reflect the security dynamic in Iraq, where the actor behind many security incidents is unknown, EUAA not only includes events that meet all the UCDP's set criteria (codified as 'clear' events in the UCDP dataset), but also include events codified as 'unclear' and 'not applicable'.

Structure and use of the report

The report is divided into two chapters. The first chapter focuses on the general security situation in Iraq by providing a general background of recent conflicts in the country, the current political situation, and information on the main armed actors in Iraq and Kurdistan Region of Iraq and their territorial presence and role. It is followed by a general overview of the current security situation in the reference period, as it relates to the nature of the violence and impact on civilians.

The second chapter provides a governorate-level description of the security situation. Each governorate chapter includes a brief description of the governorate, actors involved in the conflict, recent security trends, including information on civilian casualties, civilian infrastructure impacted and the existence of unexploded ordnances UXO and Explosive Remnants of War ERW, as well as information on displacement and return.

For organisational purposes only, the governorates are clustered in geographic order and are grouped as follows:

- the northwestern and central governorates (Anbar, Babil, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Salah al-Din);
- Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah);
- the southern governorates (Basrah, Karbala, Missan, Muthanna, Najaf, Qadissiya, Thi-Qar and Wassit).

¹⁹ ACLED, Comparing Conflict Data, Similarities and Differences Across Conflict Datasets, August 2019, [url](#), pp. 5–7

[illegible]

²⁰Map 1: UN, Iraq - Map No. 3835 Rev.6, July 2014

1. General description of the security situation

1.1. Overview of recent security trends

Throughout the reference period, Iraq continued to be affected by various conflicts: with the support of the United States-led international coalition, the Iraqi government continued its battle against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).²¹ According to the United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) reports covering the period from 25 January 2023 to 25 January 2024, the number of asymmetric attacks by ISIL declined but persisted, especially in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah Al-Din governorates. These attacks mainly targeted Iraqi security forces, who 'continued counter-terrorism operations in response'.²²

Moreover, northern Iraq continued to face Turkish ground- and airstrikes²³ due to the conflict between Türkiye and the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK),²⁴ 'an EU-listed terrorist group that Turkey believes Iraq cannot or will not suppress'.²⁵ In August 2023, Kirkuk witnessed 'days of deadly ethnic clashes'²⁶ when security forces opened fire on Kurdish protesters disputing the handover of a building to the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP),²⁷ leading the Iraqi Supreme Court to halt the handover in September.²⁸ For further information on international involvement in Iraq, please see section [1.3. International involvement](#) or more detailed information on the security situation in Kirkuk governorate, please see section [2.5. Kirkuk](#).

Domestically, the Iraqi government reportedly continued to struggle to reintegrate 'liberated Sunni communities into the political system' and had difficulties demobilising powerful Shia militias that had emerged from the fight against ISIL and integrating them into the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF).²⁹ For further information on political developments within the reference period of this report, please see section [1.2. Political developments](#).

Furthermore, the resurgence of the Israel-Hamas conflict following the October 2023 events led to a renewed rise in tensions between Iranian-backed Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF)

²¹ RULAC, Non-international armed conflicts in Iraq, last updated 18 May 2023, [url](#)

²² UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 19; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 24; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 16

²³ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 32; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 26; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 18

²⁴ CFR, Instability in Iraq, last updated 13 February 2024, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#); RULAC, Non-international armed conflicts in Iraq, last updated 18 May 2023, [url](#)

²⁵ Hadad, H., From shock and awe to stability and flaws: Iraq's post-invasion journey, ECFR, 25 May 2023, [url](#), p. 15

²⁶ CFR, Instability in Iraq, last updated 13 February 2024, [url](#)

²⁷ HRW, Iraq: Security Forces Open Fire on Kirkuk Protesters, 8 September 2023, [url](#); CFR, Instability in Iraq, last updated 13 February 2024, [url](#)

²⁸ CFR, Instability in Iraq, last updated 13 February 2024, [url](#)

²⁹ CFR, Instability in Iraq, last updated 13 February 2024, [url](#)



and US forces on Iraqi territory.³⁰ According to the UNSG, attacks on supply convoys contracted by the US-led international coalition against ISIL resumed for the first time since August 2022 in the first quarter of 2023.³¹ The UNSG reported a total of 14 such attacks between 12 January 2023 and 25 January 2024.³²

February to October 2023

At the outset of the reference period, Iraq reportedly experienced a phase of relative calm and stability, the most stable since the years prior to the 2003 US-led invasion.³³ Iraq expert Michael Knights³⁴ stated in June 2023 that the country had reached a level of stability with a functioning government and a decline in the level of terrorist violence since 2003.³⁵

However, as highlighted by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in March 2023, armed violence still continued in a ‘sporadic, fragmented and localised’ form in the country, which ‘remain[ed] fragile and deeply divided’.³⁶ Peace and stability prospects were reportedly further hampered by weak security conditions³⁷, governance issues, climate and demographic pressures.³⁸ As of April 2023, Iraq’s security situation was described as complex and challenging, characterised by foreign as well as domestic violent threats.³⁹

Post-October 2023: US-Iran tensions

While the International Crisis Group reported the situation to be ‘unchanged’ between February and October 2023, following the resurgence of the conflict between Israel and Hamas, the situation in Iraq was described as ‘deteriorating’ in November 2023 and again in January 2024.⁴⁰ Prior to the October 2023 events in Gaza, there had been a period of calm in attacks by Iranian-backed militias on US diplomatic and military facilities in Iraq,⁴¹ but this period ended due to the resurgence of the Israel-Hamas conflict⁴² and several Iran-backed militias ‘intention “to engage in operations in support of the Hamas-led resistance operations in Gaza”’.⁴³ Iraq, though as of the beginning of 2024 not directly impacted by the recent Israel-Hamas conflict, was already experiencing the conflict’s indirect effects due to rising US-Iran

³⁰ Security Council Report, February 2024 Monthly Forecast, 31 January 2024, [url](#)

³¹ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 17

³² UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 20; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 25; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 17

³³ HRW, World Report 2024 – Iraq, 11 January 2024, [url](#); SIPRI, Iraq in 2023: Challenges and prospects for peace and human security, 17 March 2023, [url](#)

³⁴ Dr Michael Knights is a Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and a specialist on military and security affairs in Iraq, Iran and the Gulf region. He has travelled extensively in Iraq and has gained wide experience in working with regional security and military organisations. TWI, Experts: Michael Knights, n.d., [url](#)

³⁵ Knights, M., Iraq Is Quietly Falling Apart, Foreign Affairs, 5 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁶ SIPRI, Iraq in 2023: Challenges and prospects for peace and human security, 17 March 2023, [url](#)

³⁷ Sabri, B., Iraqi Officials Eye a Path for Chinese-Iraqi Development, TWI, 28 September 2023, [url](#)

³⁸ PMD and DPPA, The interlinkages between climate, peace and security in Iraq, April 2023, [url](#), p. 3

³⁹ Al-Sheikh Hussein, S., Iraq’s security sector: Twenty years of dashed hopes, Chatham House, 17 April 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁰ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁴¹ Knights, M., Iraq Is Quietly Falling Apart, Foreign Affairs, 5 June 2023, [url](#); Brookings, How Iraq is managing the Israel-Gaza crisis [Alshamary, M.], 21 December 2023, [url](#)

⁴² Brookings, How Iraq is managing the Israel-Gaza crisis [Alshamary, M.], 21 December 2023, [url](#)

⁴³ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 22



tensions, with Iran-backed militias targeting US personnel and local political adversaries,⁴⁴ and US forces responding with reprisals.⁴⁵

In October 2023, self-proclaimed armed groups known as ‘Islamic Resistance in Iraq’⁴⁶ targeted facilities hosting US military personell, as well as members of the international coalition against ISIL,⁴⁷ mainly in Anbar and Erbil governorates.⁴⁸ For more detailed information on the Islamic Resistance, please see section [USA](#) of this report. Further attacks were launched in November 2023 in Babil, Kirkuk, Wassit⁴⁹ and Anbar governorates,⁵⁰ as well as Baghdad.⁵¹ In December 2023 the US embassy in Baghdad was reportedly hit.⁵²

After retaliatory US airstrikes on 25 December 2023, the Iraqi government condemned the US strikes and reported that one Iraqi service member was killed and 18 other people were injured, including civilians.⁵³ Airwars⁵⁴ listed the 25 December airstrike as (for the reference period) one of two US airstrikes characterised as ‘incidents with civilian harm allegations’ with reportedly two female civilians injured. In February 2024, a US airstrike in Anbar governorate allegedly resulted in the death of three civilians, according to Airwars.⁵⁵

Relations between the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and Iran have also been strained since the October 2023 events in Gaza: on 15 January 2024, Iranian ballistic missiles targeted a site in Erbil, the capital of the KRI, killing at least four civilians. Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) alleged that the attack was aimed at an Israeli ‘spy’ site.⁵⁶

The situation in Iraq had become increasingly volatile amid the Israel-Hamas’ conflict, as Iraqi militia groups stepped up their attacks on US targets.⁵⁷ Moreover, the ongoing retaliatory escalation, if not contained, could reportedly threaten the future of the international coalition’s mission of countering ISIL in Iraq.⁵⁸

For more detailed information on the Iranian and US involvement in Iraq, please see section [1.3. International involvement](#) of this report; for further information on the Iran-US-tensions

⁴⁴ Goudsouzian, T., Iraq can’t hold off Gaza’s spillover much longer, The New Arab, 2 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁵ Security Council Report, February 2024 Monthly Forecast, 31 January 2024, [url](#); Brookings, How Iraq is managing the Israel-Gaza crisis [Alshamary, M.], 21 December 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁶ The so-called Islamic Resistance emerged as an umbrella term in October 2023 in the context of the Israel-Hamas conflict, with the aim of demonstrating unity among Iran-affiliated armed groups; TWI, Profile: The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, last updated 30 October 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁷ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 21-22

⁴⁸ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 22

⁴⁹ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 25, 27, 30

⁵⁰ TWI, Leaving Iraq May Be Washington’s Wisest Choice, 26 February 2024, [url](#)

⁵¹ TWI, Leaving Iraq May Be Washington’s Wisest Choice, 26 February 2024, [url](#); Security Council Report, February 2024 Monthly Forecast, 31 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵² UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 28

⁵³ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 30-31

⁵⁴ ‘Airwars is a not-for-profit transparency watchdog which tracks, assesses, archives and investigates civilian harm claims in conflict-affected nations.’ Airwars, Who we are, n.d., [url](#)

⁵⁵ Airwars, US-led coalition in Iraq & Syria [filter: US forces, US-led coalition; incidents with civilian harm allegations], as of 11 March 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁶ Security Council Report, February 2024 Monthly Forecast, 31 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁷ Security Council Report, February 2024 Monthly Forecast, 31 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁸ Brookings, How Iraq is managing the Israel-Gaza crisis [Alshamary, M.], 21 December 2023, [url](#)



in Iraq prior to February 2023, please refer to section 1.1.1 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Conflict with ISIL

Throughout the reporting period, the UNSG cited ISIL strongholds in the outskirts of Baghdad (Tarmiyah)⁵⁹ and Salah-Al-Din, Diyala, Kirkuk and Ninewa⁶⁰ governorates.⁶¹ ISIL operations were reportedly mainly limited to rural areas, with attacks in urban areas becoming less prevalent.⁶² Attacks primarily targeted ‘government and security officials, community leaders, civilians and military facilities’.⁶³

Following the official declaration of ISIL’s defeat in Iraq in December 2017,⁶⁴ as of March 2023 ISIL, with an estimated 500 active fighters in the country, is no longer considered to be able to recruit new members in Iraq. As a result, large-scale military operations against the group have ceased.⁶⁵

In July 2023, the United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) reported that the ongoing counter-terrorism initiatives by the Iraqi Security Forces were effective in reducing the activities of ISIL. Despite these efforts, ISIL was able to maintain a ‘low-grade insurgency’⁶⁶ by exploiting security gaps between federally controlled Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan.⁶⁷ This allowed them to launch attacks and resupply their cells in the desert and mountain areas.⁶⁸ In January 2024,

⁵⁹ UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, [url](#), para. 32

⁶⁰ UNSG, Eighteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2024/117, 31 January 2024, [url](#), para. 35

⁶¹ UNSG, Eighteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2024/117, 31 January 2024, [url](#), para. 35; UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, [url](#), para. 32

⁶² UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, [url](#), para. 32

⁶³ UNSG, Eighteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2024/117, 31 January 2024, [url](#), para. 35

⁶⁴ Ali, O.O. and Mohammed, N.A., The Islamic State is Defeated in Iraq, but its Legacy Lives on, LSE Blog, 8 December 2023, [url](#); Hadad, H., From shock and awe to stability and flaws: Iraq’s post-invasion journey, ECFR, 25 May 2023, [url](#), p. 13

⁶⁵ SIPRI, Iraq in 2023: Challenges and prospects for peace and human security, 17 March 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶ UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, [url](#), para. 32

⁶⁷ Hadad, H., From shock and awe to stability and flaws: Iraq’s post-invasion journey, ECFR, 25 May 2023, [url](#), pp. 13-14; UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, [url](#), para. 32; UNSG, Eighteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2024/117, 31 January 2024, [url](#), para. 35

⁶⁸ UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, [url](#), para. 32



the UNSG noted that ISIL's operations remained 'largely constrained' due to the effective targeting of its members and the disruption of their sleeper cells and networks. Nonetheless, ISIL managed to carry out 'periodic attacks'.⁶⁹

For more detailed information on ISIL's capacities, presence and activities in Iraq, please refer to section [0](#) of this report, for further information on the conflict with ISIL prior to February 2023, please refer to section 1.1.1 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Tensions within the Iraqi security apparatus/within the PMF

The lack of cohesion between various security groups constitutes a persistent problem for the Iraqi government.⁷⁰ According to Hamzeh Hadad,⁷¹ the existence of numerous security organisations with different affiliations and objectives, including traditional units such as the Iraqi army and police as well as non-traditional ones such as the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) and the Kurdish Peshmerga, exacerbates the risk posed by terrorism, which has declined in recent years but remains a latent problem. Although the PMF are now officially part of the Iraqi security apparatus,⁷² the integration process has been slow,⁷³ giving the Iraqi military limited control over the groups.⁷⁴ In the referencing period, clashes between different PMF factions⁷⁵ as well as between PMF forces and regular Iraqi security forces were reported.⁷⁶ According to a May 2023 article published by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (TWI), Iraqi militias have increased their territorial presence and have become more assertive in their ability to challenge the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service (CTS), the Iraqi army, and the federal police.⁷⁷ For further information on the Coordination Framework, please see section [National political developments](#) for more detailed information on the PMF, please see section [Popular Mobilisation Forces \(PMF\)](#).

⁶⁹ UNSG, Eighteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2024/117, 31 January 2024, [url](#), para. 34

⁷⁰ Hadad, H., From shock and awe to stability and flaws: Iraq's post-invasion journey, ECFR, 25 May 2023, [url](#), p. 14

⁷¹ Hamzeh Hadad is a Baghdad-based political analyst and researcher focusing on democratisation and federalism in Iraq. ECFR, Experts & Staff: Hamzeh Hadad, n.d., [url](#)

⁷² Security Council Report, February 2024 Monthly Forecast, 31 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷³ SIPRI, Iraq in 2023: Challenges and prospects for peace and human security, 17 March 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁴ Security Council Report, February 2024 Monthly Forecast, 31 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁵ TWI, Infighting Between Northern Hashd Units Requires IRGC-QF Mediation, 6 July 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁶ Al-Kaabi, A. and Knights, M., Kataib Hezbollah's Escalating Feud with the Iraqi Security Forces, TWI, 19 May 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁷ Al-Kaabi, A. and Knights, M., Kataib Hezbollah's Escalating Feud with the Iraqi Security Forces, TWI, 19 May 2023, [url](#)



1.2. Political developments

National political developments

On 4 February 2023, the Government of Iraq, led by Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani, reached its first 100 days in office.⁷⁸ The Coordination Framework, a coalition of political parties backed by Iran,⁷⁹ continued to dominate Iraq's parliament as its biggest alignment.⁸⁰ The alliance includes the Fatah Alliance headed by Hadi Al-Amiri of the Badr Organization, the Hikma bloc led by Ammar Al-Hakim, former Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi's Nasr coalition and former Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki's State of Law coalition, as well as the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).⁸¹ The Sadrist Movement, which was initially the main winner in the 2021 parliamentary elections, remained withdrawn from parliament.⁸²

The political situation in the Kurdistan Region

The political landscape in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq has witnessed long-standing rivalries between the dominant parties, the KDP and the PUK.⁸³ In May 2023, the PUK agreed to return to meetings of the Kurdistan Regional government (KRG) cabinet after a six-month boycott.⁸⁴

Initially scheduled for 1st October 2022, parliamentary elections were postponed due to disagreements over electoral procedures.⁸⁵ The Kurdistan Parliament extended its term until the end of 2023, but this move was ruled unconstitutional by Iraq's Federal Supreme Court on 30 May 2023,⁸⁶ resulting in the dissolution of the parliament.⁸⁷ The ruling further ordered the Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission to supervise elections in the region.⁸⁸ Subsequent attempts to hold elections in November 2023⁸⁹, at the end of February 2024 and, lastly, in June 2024,⁹⁰ were met with delays. Within the reporting period, no parliamentary elections took place in the Kurdistan Region.⁹¹

⁷⁸ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 2

⁷⁹ Al Jazeera, Iraqi parliament passes controversial vote law amendments, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁰ Reuters, Iraq's Shi'ite ruling alliance wins more than 100 local council seats, 20 December 2023, [url](#)

⁸¹ Global Security, Coordination Framework, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸² Rudaw, Sadr calls on supporters not to disturb local elections, 13 December 2023, [url](#)

⁸³ VOA, Iraqi Court's Decision Threatens to Undermine Kurdish Autonomy, 22 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁴ Al Jazeera, PUK returns to Kurdish Regional Government meetings after boycott, 14 May 2023, [url](#); Aydoğan, B., Iraqi Kurds Face Legitimacy Issues Amid Election Deadlock and Internal Division, TWI, 7 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁵ Aydoğan, B., Iraqi Kurds Face Legitimacy Issues Amid Election Deadlock and Internal Division, TWI, 7 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁶ Reuters, Iraqi Kurdistan 2022 parliament extension unconstitutional, supreme court rules, 30 May 2023, [url](#); UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 6; Aydoğan, B., Iraqi Kurds Face Legitimacy Issues Amid Election Deadlock and Internal Division, TWI, 7 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁷ Rudaw, Kurdish parliament's fifth term officially dissolves after Iraqi top court ruling, 2 July 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁸ New Arab (The), Iraqi Kurdistan's parliamentary elections will not be held in February, Kurdish officials say, 8 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹ Aydoğan, B., Iraqi Kurds Face Legitimacy Issues Amid Election Deadlock and Internal Division, TWI, 7 August 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, IHEC initiates preparations for Kurdistan Region elections: Spox, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰ New Arab (the), Iraqi Kurdistan region reschedules oft-delayed parliamentary elections for June, 5 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹¹ Rudaw, IHEC initiates preparations for Kurdistan Region elections: Spox, 28 February 2024, [url](#); New Arab (The), President of Iraq's Kurdistan region to delay parliamentary elections, 1 May 2024, [url](#)



Relations between Baghdad and Erbil

The situation of the so-called ‘disputed territories’, including areas of the governorates of Ninewa, Kirkuk, Salah Al-Din and Diyala contested by the Kurdistan Regional Government and the federal government of Iraq, remained unsolved during the reporting period.⁹² Prime Minister Sudani tried to improve relations with the KDP by having national forces withdraw from the security headquarters in Kirkuk and hand over control to the Kurdish Peshmerga forces, but ethnic tension within the city led to violent protests in September 2023, with the decision being suspended.⁹³

The governments of Baghdad and Erbil further continued their disputes over the supervision and utilisation of oil and gas resources within the Kurdistan Region during the reporting period. For the previous ten years, the KRG has autonomously managed its oil sector, engaging in contract signings and oil exports without Baghdad's consent, which the latter deemed illegal. In March 2023 an international arbitration decision deemed direct oil exports from the Kurdistan Region to Türkiye a breach of a bilateral agreement between the two nations, prompting the suspension of oil exports via the Iraq-Türkiye pipeline.⁹⁴ In April 2023, the federal and Kurdistan Regional Governments reached a temporary agreement to resume oil exports.⁹⁵ However, the implementation of the agreement faced delays⁹⁶ and as of January 2024 the operation of the pipeline has not been restarted.⁹⁷ The cessation of oil exports significantly impacted the Kurdistan Region's economy, given the substantial contribution of oil revenues to its budget.⁹⁸ This revenue loss, combined with irregular budget allocations from Baghdad, strained the KRG's financial resources, affecting its capacity to remunerate employees⁹⁹ and deliver essential services.¹⁰⁰ Unpaid salaries of state employees led to protests throughout the Kurdistan Region.¹⁰¹

⁹² Rudaw, Kurdish identity of disputed areas at risk: Kurdish official, 10 November 2023, [url](#)

⁹³ New Arab (The), What is driving ethnic tensions in Iraq's Kirkuk?, 13 September 2023, [url](#); Madwar, S., A war over the city: Exploring Kirkuk's multi-layered conflict, Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, 10 September 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁴ Reuters, Explainer: What is the Iraq-Turkey oil pipeline dispute and who's on the hook?, 31 March 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁵ Al Jazeera, Iraq's gov't signs deal with KRG to resume oil exports, 4 April 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁶ Reuters, Iraqi PM says foreign oil companies in Kurdistan to resume production within a month if agreement reached over contracts, 24 October 2023, [url](#); New Arab (The), Iraq, Kurdish authorities yet to agree oil exports to Turkey, 28 November 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷ MEMO, Iraq-Türkiye oil pipeline will not restart over disagreements: Iraq PM, 19 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁸ S&P Global, The Kurdistan region: Oil forecasts following pipeline shutdown, 27 November 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁹ Rudaw, KRG says Iraq paid less than half its 2023 budget share, 16 March 2024, [url](#); Rudaw, Salaries must be fairly distributed among Iraqi provinces, says former PM, 14 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ Rudaw, Patients, students, civil servants lose in Erbil, Baghdad money row, 16 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ Arab News, Iraqi Kurds protest unpaid salaries from Baghdad, 5 September 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, Thousands of teachers protest in Sulaimani over unpaid salaries, 22 October 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, Striking teachers plan protest despite government promises, 7 January 2024, [url](#)



1.3. International involvement

Türkiye

Türkiye has been conducting the military operation ‘Claw-Lock’ in northern Iraq since April 2022.¹⁰² Its proclaimed aim is removing PKK elements from the region bordering Türkiye and preventing the group from accessing Turkish territory.¹⁰³ As part of this operation, Türkiye established several military bases in northern Iraq¹⁰⁴, notably in Dohuk governorate.¹⁰⁵ According to a March 2022 report referring to sources dated from 2015 to 2021, the Turkish military presence consisted of about 10 more substantial bases as well as dozens of smaller observation points higher in the mountains.¹⁰⁶ According to estimations by a former secretary-general of the KRI Peshmerga forces, as of January 2023 Türkiye maintained 87 outposts mostly within a stretch of border territory 150 kilometres long and 30 kilometres deep into Iraqi territory,¹⁰⁷ while ANF News, an outlet described as being close to the PKK,¹⁰⁸ in January 2024 spoke of 100 military bases in KRG territory and a new base being built in Dohuk.¹⁰⁹

In mid-July 2022, the Chief of Staff of the Iraqi Army put the number of Turkish soldiers stationed on military bases in Iraq at 4 000,¹¹⁰ the 2023 Military Balance of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) indicates 1 000 troops.¹¹¹

Throughout 2023, Türkiye regularly carried out airstrikes mostly in the shared border area but also deeper within the KRI¹¹², targeting PKK positions.¹¹³ In Sinjar district in Ninewa governorate, Türkiye repeatedly targeted the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS), an affiliate of the PKK, as well as PKK fighters with drone strikes.¹¹⁴ The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) recorded 3 521 airstrikes by Turkish military forces¹¹⁵ over the reference period, targeting PKK positions, with 2 504 of them in Dohuk governorate, especially in Amedi (Al Amadiya) district and just over 810 in Erbil governorate, especially in Rawanduz district. A further 165 Turkish airstrikes were recorded in Ninewa governorate and 39 airstrikes in Sulaymaniyah

¹⁰² VOA, Turkey Launches Airstrikes Against Kurdish Militants in Iraq, Syria, 13 January 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Six Turkish soldiers killed in anti-PKK military operation in Iraq, 10 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰³ Rudaw, Iraq urges Turkey to refrain from violating its sovereignty, 6 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴ VOA, Turkey Launches Airstrikes Against Kurdish Militants in Iraq, Syria, 13 January 2024, [url](#); MEE, Iraq: Six soldiers killed in attack on Turkish base, 23 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵ VOA, Turkey Launches Airstrikes Against Kurdish Militants in Iraq, Syria, 13 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶ Aziz, S. et al., Turkish interventions in its near abroad: The case of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Clingendael Netherlands Institute of International Relations, March 2022, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁰⁷ Reuters, Turkey's push into Iraq risks deeper conflict, 31 January 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸ Reuters, Attackers set off bomb at Turkish government building, both die, 1 October 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, Five injured in separate Turkish airstrikes in Rojava, 25 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ ANF, Turkish state establishes a new base in Duhok, 21 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁰ Asharq Al-Awsat: Iraq Reveals Presence of Five Turkish Military Bases on its Soil, 26 July 2022, [url](#)

¹¹¹ IISS, The Military Balance, Volume 123, 2023, p. 330

¹¹² CFR, Conflict Between Turkey and Armed Kurdish Groups, last updated 8 August 2023, [url](#)

¹¹³ HRW, World Report 2024 – Iraq, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁴ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#); Rudaw, Three YBS members killed in Turkish drone strike in Shingal: Kurdistan CT, 23 May 2023, [url](#); Reuters, Three killed in Turkish drone strike against YBS fighters in Iraq, 27 February 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁵ Coded by ACLED as Actor 1.



governorate,¹¹⁶ among them an attack near Sulaymaniyah airport.¹¹⁷ Turkish intelligence further claimed to have carried out operations in northern Iraq specifically targeting PKK operatives.¹¹⁸

The Iraqi government has frequently denounced the Turkish military presence,¹¹⁹ while the KRG has not publicly condemned it.¹²⁰ The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) is supportive of Türkiye's fight against the PKK while the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) maintains ties with the group.¹²¹ In April 2023 the Turkish government imposed a flight ban on Sulaymaniyah International Airport and extended it for another six months in July 2023, alleging that the airport had become a hub for PKK operations.¹²² A further six-months extension of the flight ban was announced in December 2023.¹²³

For information on the impact of Turkish operations on civilians, please see section [Security incidents](#).

Iran

Iran has significantly influenced Iraqi politics and has supported affiliated paramilitary groups in the country. Its main objectives are to prevent an Iraqi government hostile toward Iran and to expel the US military presence from Iraq and the wider region.¹²⁴ Through its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) – Quds Force, Iran has provided financial and material support, such as weapons, to groups like Kata'ib Hezbollah, Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq and Harakat Al-Nujaba.¹²⁵ These groups, along with other smaller militias, form the core of self-styled Islamic Resistance in Iraq whose focus is to expel the US presence from Iraq and establish control of the state.¹²⁶ The IRGC has further become involved in most of the country's major economic sectors by undertaking infrastructure projects and has been engaging in smuggling activities.¹²⁷ The strong links between IRGC and PMF have become visible through activities such as a joint military parade carried out in Basra¹²⁸ and a joint maritime exercise of Iranian Basij Naval forces and PMF in the Shatt Al-Arab waters in January 2024.¹²⁹ The

¹¹⁶ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Iraq, data covering 1 February 2023 to 26 January 2024, as of 26 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁷ Al-Monitor, Iraqi Kurds protest Turkish bombardment of airport, 9 April 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ Daily Sabah, Turkish intelligence eliminates yet another PKK figure in Iraq, 7 November 2023, [url](#); National (The), PKK commander 'neutralised' in Iraq, Turkish intelligence claims, 5 July 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁹ Rudaw, Iraq urges Turkey to refrain from violating its sovereignty, 6 February 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Six Turkish soldiers killed in anti-PKK military operation in Iraq, 10 August 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁰ Al Jazeera, Six Turkish soldiers killed in anti-PKK military operation in Iraq, 10 August 2023, [url](#)

¹²¹ CFR, Conflict Between Turkey and Armed Kurdish Groups, last updated 8 August 2023, [url](#)

¹²² Al-Monitor, Turkey extends flight ban on Iraqi Kurds' Sulaimaniyah airport over alleged PKK support, 3 July 2023, [url](#)

¹²³ Rudaw, Turkey extends Sulaimani flight ban for 6 months, 23 December 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁴ CFR, How Much Influence Does Iran Have in Iraq?, 18 October 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁵ USDOS, Country Report on Terrorism 2022 – Chapter 5, 30 November 2023, [url](#), p. 205

¹²⁶ Smith, C. and Knights, M., Remaking Iraq: How Iranian-Backed Militias Captured the Country, Just Security, 20 March 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁷ Al-Aloosy, M., Iraq's PMF Wants to Be Iran's IRGC, Gulf International Forum, 9 June 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁸ Kittleson, S., As slain leaders commemorated, Iraq and Iran attacked yet again, Al-Majalla, last updated 8 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁹ Alsharq Al-Awsat, Basij, Iraqi PMF Stage Joint Display in Shatt al-Arab, 3 January 2024, [url](#)



Washington Institute for Near East Policy (TWI) reported that in May 2023, a senior member of the IRGC was called upon to mediate following clashes between two PMF units in Kirkuk.¹³⁰

On 15 January 2024, missiles launched by the IRGC hit the outskirts of Erbil,¹³¹ near the US consulate, reportedly killing at least four civilians.¹³² While the IRGC claimed the attack was aimed at Israeli ‘spy headquarters’,¹³³ sources analysed that Iran, not wanting to directly strike its actual opponents Israel and the US, opted instead to target the regional ally of the US, namely the Kurdistan Regional Government.¹³⁴

Iran has consistently accused the KRI of providing refuge to Iranian Kurdish opposition groups and has in the past launched strikes on their camps.¹³⁵ It has further blamed these groups for fomenting unrest in Iranian Kurdistan following the protests triggered by the death of the young Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini in September 2022.¹³⁶ In March 2023, the Iranian and Iraqi governments signed a border security agreement. It aims at cooperation to protect the common border, and saw Iraq pledging to prevent armed groups in the KRI from launching cross-border attacks against Iran.¹³⁷ Part of the agreement was to disarm Iranian Kurdish opposition groups and move their camps further away from the border region.¹³⁸ The Iranian military set a deadline for September 2023 for the implementation, threatening to resume cross-border strikes if the agreement was not met.¹³⁹ The Iraqi Foreign Minister claimed in September that the relocation of Iranian Kurdish groups away from the border into camps deeper inside the KRI was underway.¹⁴⁰ Certain groups such as the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) and Komala parties reportedly left camps in Erbil governorate, while the PKK-affiliated Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) refused to be disarmed.¹⁴¹

USA

About 2 500 US troops are stationed in Iraq,¹⁴² at the Ain Al-Asad Base in Anbar governorate, the Victory Base near Baghdad, the Hareer Base in Erbil governorate,¹⁴³ and a base near Erbil International Airport.¹⁴⁴ Since their mission to combat ISIL ended in 2021, these troops have

¹³⁰ TWI, *Infighting Between Northern Hashd Units Requires IRGC-QF Mediation*, 6 July 2023, [url](#)

¹³¹ CFRI, *Iranian Strikes in Iraqi Kurdistan: A Calculated Provocation from Tehran*, 17 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³² EPIC, ISHM: January 11 – 18, 2024, 18 January 2024, [url](#); Amwaj.media, *Inside story: Iranian ballistic missiles rock Iraqi Kurdistan*, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³³ EPIC, ISHM: January 11 – 18, 2024, 18 January 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, *Iran launches missile strikes in Iraq and Syria citing security threats*, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁴ Al-Monitor, *How Iran chose easy targets in Iraq's Erbil to avoid Israeli reprisal*, 16 January 2024, [url](#); CFRI, *Iranian Strikes in Iraqi Kurdistan: A Calculated Provocation from Tehran*, 17 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁵ Reuters, *Iraq starts relocating Iranian Kurdish fighters from Iran border*, 12 September 2023, [url](#); CFR, *How Much Influence Does Iran Have in Iraq?*, 18 October 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁶ Van Wilgenburg, W., *Iran's Pressure Campaign on Iranian Kurds Continues*, TWI, 13 September 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁷ Al Jazeera, *Iraq and Iran sign deal to tighten border security*, 19 March 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁸ Aziz, S., *The Many Shades of Iran-Iraq Security Agreement*, EPC, 11 August 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁹ Rudaw, *Iran threatens attacks on Kurdish groups if Iraq fails to secure border*, 11 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰ Reuters, *Iraq starts relocating Iranian Kurdish fighters from Iran border*, 12 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴¹ International Crisis Group, *Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024*, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴² Alsharq Al-Awsat, *PMF Chief Demands Withdrawal of US-Led Coalition from Iraq*, 4 February 2024, [url](#); Amwaj.media, *Deep Dive: Why a US withdrawal from Iraq is off the table*, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴³ Germany, BAMF, *Briefing Notes Summary*, 31 December 2023, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁴⁴ AA, *2nd drone targeting US-led coalition base near Iraq's Erbil airport shot down in last 24 hours*, 12 January 2024, [url](#)



stayed in a training and advisory capacity¹⁴⁵ to assist the ISF, the CTS as well as Kurdish Security Forces.¹⁴⁶

Beginning in October 2023 following the start of the Israel-Hamas conflict on 7 October, bases housing US troops were repeatedly targeted by rocket¹⁴⁷ and drone attacks.¹⁴⁸ According to US reports, most of the drones and rockets were intercepted,¹⁴⁹ with the attacks being attributed to the so-called Islamic Resistance group, which consists of Shiite militias closely linked with Iran.¹⁵⁰ The Islamic Resistance emerged as an umbrella term in October 2023 in the context of the Israel-Hamas conflict to demonstrate unity among Iran-backed armed groups behind attacks against US interests.¹⁵¹ US intelligence identified the Islamic Resistance to be a front group for Iran-allied militias, among them Kata'ib Hezbollah, Harakat Al-Nujaba, Harakat Ansar Allah Al-Awfiya and Kata'ib Sayyid Al-Shuhada.¹⁵² The US military responded with airstrikes that targeted leading members of the Shiite militias suspected to be behind these attacks¹⁵³ as well as their facilities.¹⁵⁴ Some US retaliatory strikes caused casualties among PMF units¹⁵⁵ leading to tensions between the Iraqi and US governments.¹⁵⁶ Both governments were reportedly set to start talks on a possible withdrawal of US troops from Iraq.¹⁵⁷ However, several factors such as the US presidential election set for November 2024¹⁵⁸ and Iran-Israel tensions reportedly delayed a decision regarding the withdrawal.¹⁵⁹ From February 2024 onwards, a halt to the attacks on US targets carried out by the Islamic Resistance was noted, reportedly due to the desire by Iran not to escalate the situation further at that time.¹⁶⁰

¹⁴⁵ Amwaj.media, Deep Dive: Why a US withdrawal from Iraq is off the table, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, July 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023, 9 November 2023, [url](#), p. 15

¹⁴⁷ EPIC, ISHM: November 16 – 30, 2023, 30 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸ Reuters, Armed drone shot down near US base in northern Iraq – sources, 18 January 2024, [url](#); AA, 2nd drone targeting US-led coalition base near Iraq's Erbil airport shot down in last 24 hours, 12 January 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Drone attack targets Iraq's Harir base, sirens sound at US embassy, 9 November 2023, [url](#); Reuters, Rockets, drones hit Iraqi bases housing U.S. forces, 20 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹ Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, [url](#), p. 7; New Arab (The), Iraq: Explosive drone shot down at Erbil airbase hosting US forces, 2 January 2024, [url](#); basnews, Drone Attack Intercepted Over Skies of US Military Base in Erbil, 3 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰ Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁵¹ TWI, Profile: The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, last updated 30 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵² USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁵³ NPR, U.S. drone strike kills a leader of an Iran-backed militia in Iraq, 7 February 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: December 28, 2023 – January 4, 2024, 4 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴ Reuters, U.S. forces carry out series of strikes against Iran-backed militia in Iraq, 22 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵ Alsharq Al-Awsat, PMF Chief Demands Withdrawal of US-Led Coalition from Iraq, 4 February 2024, [url](#); Al-Sumaria, هيئة الحشد تعلن وقوع 12 ضحية بـ"اعتداءات" أمريكية [PMU Commission declares 12 casualties in US attacks], 22 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶ Alsharq Al-Awsat, PMF Chief Demands Withdrawal of US-Led Coalition from Iraq, 4 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷ Arab Weekly (The), US to negotiate with Iraq end of military coalition presence in Iraq, 25 January 2024, [url](#);

Alsharq Al-Awsat, PMF Chief Demands Withdrawal of US-Led Coalition from Iraq, 4 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸ Reuters, Talks to end US-led coalition in Iraq may take until after US election, Iraqi official says, 12 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹ Alsharq Al-Awsat, Iran-Israel Tension Delays Decision on US Troop Withdrawal from Iraq, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰ TWI, Explaining Apparent Muqawama De-Escalation Since January 28, 7 February 2024, [url](#); New Arab (The), Iran-backed militias in Iraq halt attacks on US targets amid claims of defending Gaza, 21 February 2024, [url](#)



1.4. Armed Actors

Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL)

There are widely diverging estimations regarding the number of ISIL fighters in Iraq and Syria, ranging from UN figures of 3 000 to 5 000 fighters¹⁶¹ to US estimations of 8 000 to 16 000 fighters¹⁶² with frequent movement taking place across the porous border between the two countries.¹⁶³ An Iraqi General in March 2023 gave a lower number of 500 active ISIL fighters in Iraq, arguing that the group has 'lost its ability to attract new recruits'.¹⁶⁴ In July 2023, Mohammed Hassan, a non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute, analysed that ISIL has failed to make a comeback in Iraq due to the deployment and capacities of the Iraqi army, security services, and supporting militias, the reduced popularity of the Islamist movement, less support from the local population, the failure to recruit members as well as the loss of financial resources.¹⁶⁵ According to a June 2023 statement from the spokesman for the commander of the armed forces, 99% of ISIL's capacity had been eliminated and the group consisted of small cells of two to six members hiding in desert areas, valleys or mountain ranges.¹⁶⁶

The US Department of Defense (USDOD) reported in its quarterly reports on the status of the US military Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq and Syria that ISIL was operating in a survival mode¹⁶⁷ and was unable to launch larger complex attacks.¹⁶⁸ According to the reports, ISIL was maintaining a 'low-grade insurgency in rural areas',¹⁶⁹ with most of its attacks occurring in Diyala, Kirkuk and Salah Al-Din governorates.¹⁷⁰ According to the UN Secretary-General, asymmetric attacks carried out by ISIL were recorded in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates, mostly targeting the ISF.¹⁷¹ Throughout the reference

¹⁶¹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 45

¹⁶² USDOS, Country Report on Terrorism 2022 – Chapter 5, 30 November 2023, [url](#), p. 279

¹⁶³ CFRI, Daesh: Which outlook for Iraq in 2023?, 13 March 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴ AFP, Up to 500 IS fighters still active in Iraq: military, 12 March 2023

¹⁶⁵ Hassan, M., Why ISIS Cannot Bring the Caliphate Back to Life, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 18 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶ Al-Arabiya, الجيش العراقي: قضينا على 99% من عناصر داعش بالبلاد [Iraqi army: we have vanquished 99% of ISIL members in the country], 23 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 16; USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, July 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023, 9 November 2023, [url](#), p. 12; USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, April 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023, 3 August 2023, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁶⁸ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 16; USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, July 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023, 9 November 2023, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁶⁹ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, July 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023, 9 November 2023, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁷⁰ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 16; USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, April 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023, 3 August 2023, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁷¹ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 19; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 24; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 16



period, the International Crisis Group reported clashes between ISIL and ISF, resulting in deaths on both sides. Additionally, there were sporadic attacks on PMF positions.¹⁷²

The UN Secretary-General further noted an overall decline in the number of attacks in the first half of 2023 (178 attacks) compared to the first half of 2022 (526 attacks).¹⁷³ The trend continued throughout 2023, with 92 attacks in the first quarter¹⁷⁴ and 54 attacks in the last quarter.¹⁷⁵ ACLED recorded 44 incidents of violence employed by ISIL affecting civilians (explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians)¹⁷⁶ with overall 42 fatalities within the reference period.¹⁷⁷ Sources reported among ISIL-related incidents killings¹⁷⁸ and kidnappings of civilians.¹⁷⁹

Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)

The ISF consist of the military and security forces reporting to the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior and the Council of Ministers.¹⁸⁰ The army reports to the Ministry of Defence, the Federal Police and Border Guard Force report to the Ministry of Interior. The Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) exists outside the two ministries and reports directly to the Prime Minister.¹⁸¹ The army ground forces, including CTS, reportedly comprise approximately 180 000 troops, while the Federal Police has about 36 000 troops.¹⁸² The Federal Police has been trained in anti-ISIL ground combat, leading to a focus on a more paramilitary role at the expense of traditional policing duties.¹⁸³

During the reference period, the ISF conducted anti-ISIL operations in Kirkuk, Diyala, Anbar, Salah Al-Din governorates and near Baghdad by carrying out airstrikes and engaging in clashes resulting in the killing of suspected ISIL militants.¹⁸⁴ In June 2023, the spokesman for the commander of the armed forces announced that the security situation in areas liberated from ISIL was very good and would allow handing over the responsibility for the security sector in the city centres to the Ministry of Interior. The plan for the armed forces would therefore be to withdraw from the cities and deploy outside them, carrying out tasks such as

¹⁷² International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁷³ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 24

¹⁷⁴ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 16

¹⁷⁵ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 19

¹⁷⁶ Actor 1 filtered to ISIL, Actor 2 filtered to civilians.

¹⁷⁷ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

¹⁷⁸ Rudaw, داعش ينحر راع في طوزخورماتو [ISIL kills shepherd in Tuz Khurmatu], 12 March 2023, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Gunmen kill 11 in roadside attack in eastern Iraq, 1 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹ EPIC, ISHM: January 4 – 11, 2024, 11 January 2024, [url](#); Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, داعش ينتقل لخطف رعاة الأغنام قرب المدن المحررة في العراق [ISIL resorts to kidnapping shepherds close to liberated cities in Iraq], 16 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰ ISW, Iraqi Security Forces And Popular Mobilization Forces: Orders Of Battle, December 2017, [url](#), p. 10

¹⁸¹ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, October 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021, 8 February 2022, [url](#), p. 30

¹⁸² IISS, The Military Balance, Volume 123, 2023, pp. 328-330

¹⁸³ Egel, D. et al., The Future of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces - Lessons from Historical Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Efforts, RAND Corporation, 2023, [url](#), p. 6

¹⁸⁴ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#)

securing the borders and filling any security vacuums existing in rural areas or the desert region of Anbar governorate.¹⁸⁵

Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF)

The PMF (also known as the Popular Mobilisation Units, PMU or Al-Hashd Al-Sha'bi) are 'an umbrella of more than 60 armed factions that operate separately from the ISF and are nominally under the command of the Iraqi prime minister'.¹⁸⁶ They were originally formed in 2014 to combat ISIL following the group's takeover of the northern city of Mosul.¹⁸⁷ In April 2023, the finance committee of the Iraqi parliament published a report stating that the number of PMF personnel in the 2023 budget had increased by 95 %, from 122 000 to 238 000.¹⁸⁸ PMF Chairman Falih Al-Fayyadh later gave a lower figure of 204 000 troops covered in the budget allocated to the PMF.¹⁸⁹ According to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (TWI), the number of registered PMF troops has long been deliberately obscured and the actual troop numbers have always exceeded the number of those registered.¹⁹⁰

The PMF are heterogeneous in nature¹⁹¹ and there are internal rivalries within PMF ranks.¹⁹² The PMF are characterised by three factions, the first and the most powerful one is allied with Iran,¹⁹³ featuring groups such as the Badr Corps, Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq, and Kata'ib Hezbollah.¹⁹⁴ The second follows the Shiite religious authority in Najaf, headed by Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani and the third is loyal to the political and religious leader Muqtada Al-Sadr.¹⁹⁵ Most of the PMF members are Shia Arabs¹⁹⁶, however there are smaller militias made up of Sunni Arabs or

¹⁸⁵ Al-Arabiya, داعش بالبلاد: الجيش العراقي: قضينا على 99% من عناصر داعش بالبلاد [Iraqi army: we have vanquished 99% of ISIL members in the country], 23 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 20

¹⁸⁷ Alaaldin, R., The Popular Mobilization Force is turning Iraq into an Iranian client state [Commentary], Brookings, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸ Al-Kaabi, A. and Knights, M., Extraordinary Popular Mobilization Force Expansion, by the Numbers, TWI, 3 June 2023, [url](#); CFRI, In Iraq, the Hashd calls the shots, 3 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹ Amwaj.media, Granted expanded funding and personnel, Iraq's PMU highlights drone arsenal, 20 June 2023, [url](#); Al-Kaabi, A. and Knights, M., Extraordinary Popular Mobilization Force Expansion, by the Numbers, TWI, 3 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁹⁰ Al-Kaabi, A. and Knights, M., Extraordinary Popular Mobilization Force Expansion, by the Numbers, TWI, 3 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁹¹ CFRI, In Iraq, the Hashd calls the shots, 3 November 2023, [url](#); Ezzedine, N. and van Veen, E., Power in perspective: Four key insights into Iraq's Al-Hashd al-Sha'abi, Clingendael Netherlands Institute of International Relations, June 2018, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁹² Al-Kaabi, A. and Knights, M., Hadi al-Ameri's Bad(r) Month, TWI, 21 February 2024, [url](#); Al-Kaabi, A. and Knights, M., Badr and Asaib Crack the Whip on Kataib al-Imam Ali in Basra, TWI, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹³ CFRI, In Iraq, the Hashd calls the shots, 3 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁹⁴ Egel, D. et al., The Future of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces - Lessons from Historical Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Efforts, RAND Corporation, 2023, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁹⁵ CFRI, In Iraq, the Hashd calls the shots, 3 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁹⁶ USDOS, 2022 Country Reports on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 1

smaller minority groups,¹⁹⁷ such as Yazidi,¹⁹⁸ Christian,¹⁹⁹ Shabak,²⁰⁰ and Turkmen units.²⁰¹ These smaller groups are allied with the main factions, often with the pro-Iranian groups because of their influence and power.²⁰² They are generally active within or near the regions they live in.²⁰³

Beginning in 2016, the Iraqi parliament passed several bills aimed at officially bringing the PMF under government control²⁰⁴ and integrating them into the state security forces.²⁰⁵ The ambiguously worded law, however, made it possible for the PMF to remain a highly autonomous entity, using their status as a state actor to their benefit while at the same time interpreting their institutional mandate quite freely.²⁰⁶ There are some militia groups that still exist outside the official PMF structure²⁰⁷ as well as groups which operate several state-funded PMF-brigades but also receive orders from the IRGC, among them Kata'ib Hezbollah²⁰⁸ and Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq.²⁰⁹ PMF troops are widely considered to be loyal to their individual leaders and in some cases to report to Iranian advisors.²¹⁰ This leads them to carry out operations without the approval of the Iraqi Prime Minister, the commander-in-chief of all Iraqi security forces.²¹¹

During the reference period, PMF units were engaged in anti-ISIL operations across the country.²¹² In addition to conducting security-related activities, the PMF have gradually expanded their influence over the Iraqi state, forming a political bloc with a significant presence in the Iraqi parliament as well as provincial councils, and gaining indirect control of several ministries as well as the Supreme Court.²¹³ Representatives of PMF factions have a

¹⁹⁷ Egel, D. et al., The Future of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces - Lessons from Historical Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Efforts, RAND Corporation, 2023, [url](#), p. 4; CFRI, In Iraq, the Hashd calls the shots, 3 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁹⁸ KirkukNow, Shingal: PMF recruits locals for new brigade, 11 April 2023, [url](#)

¹⁹⁹ TWI, Profile: Kataib Babiliyoun (50th PMF Brigade), last updated 27 November 2023, [url](#)

²⁰⁰ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, December 1, 2023, 1 December 2023, [url](#)

²⁰¹ Kurdistan24, Turkmen Brigades prevent several Kurdish families from reclaiming Kirkuk homes, 3 December 2023, [url](#)

²⁰² CFRI, In Iraq, the Hashd calls the shots, 3 November 2023, [url](#)

²⁰³ USDOS, 2022 Country Reports on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 1

²⁰⁴ Egel, D. et al., The Future of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces - Lessons from Historical Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Efforts, RAND Corporation, 2023, [url](#), pp. 3-4

²⁰⁵ Amwaj.media, Granted expanded funding and personnel, Iraq's PMU highlights drone arsenal, 20 June 2023, [url](#)

²⁰⁶ Rudolf, I., Tracing the Role of the Violent Entrepreneurs in the Iraqi Post-Conflict Economy, New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy, May 2023, [url](#), p. 5

²⁰⁷ Egel, D. et al., The Future of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces - Lessons from Historical Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Efforts, RAND Corporation, 2023, [url](#), p. 4; Irfaasawtak, زيادة أعداد عناصر الحشد "تقلق" البعض.. لماذا؟ [The increase of PMU troops in Iraq is worrying to some – why?], 3 May 2023, [url](#)

²⁰⁸ TWI, Profile: Kataib Hezbollah, last updated 21 October 2023, [url](#)

²⁰⁹ TWI, Profile: Asaib Ahl al-Haq, last updated 21 October 2023, [url](#)

²¹⁰ Egel, D. et al., The Future of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces - Lessons from Historical Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Efforts, RAND Corporation, 2023, [url](#), p. 4; for an example of such a PMU unit, see TWI, Profile: Ansar Allah al-Awfiya (19th PMF Brigade), last updated 29 November 2023, [url](#)

²¹¹ ISW and CTP, The Leadership and Purpose of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces, 19 March 2024, [url](#)

²¹² Iraqi News, Two PMF fighters killed in an attack carried out by ISIS, 7 January 2024, [url](#); INA, PMF captures two ISIS terrorists planning to attack civilians, 2 January 2024, [url](#); Rudaw, Iraq launches anti-ISIS operation in Kirkuk after spate of attacks, 3 December 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: November 16 – 30, 2023, 30 November 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: September 14 – 21, 2023, 21 September 2023, [url](#)

²¹³ Alaaldin, R., The Popular Mobilization Force is turning Iraq into an Iranian client state [Commentary], Brookings, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

seat in parliament and determine policy.²¹⁴ While the state budget allocates salaries to the PMF for their role as security agents, PMF members have sought to increase their gains by engaging in extralegal and illegal activities, such as creating military enterprises, seizing properties, imposing arbitrary taxes at checkpoints, smuggling goods such as oil, trading in scrap metal, kidnapping and extortion.²¹⁵ Since the end of major fighting operations against ISIL, the PMF have dominated the security sector in the liberated governorates Ninewa, Anbar and Salah Al-Din, where they have also sought to profit economically by becoming a partner in reconstruction efforts, imposing fees and levying taxes on businesses and transportation of goods, especially across borders.²¹⁶ Iranian-backed PMF were reportedly present at and around the country's major border crossings.²¹⁷ Sources have pointed out an increasing organisational resemblance to the IRGC,²¹⁸ for example through the establishment of the PMF's own government approved construction company mirroring the Khatam Al-Anbiya company of the IRGC.²¹⁹

In the wake of the resurgence of the Israel-Hamas conflict, a loose coalition of several Iranian-backed militias calling themselves Islamic Resistance in Iraq emerged and began carrying out attacks on US personnel stationed in Iraq.²²⁰ Retaliatory airstrikes carried out by the US resulted in the killing of PMF fighters.²²¹ PMF Chairman Falih Al-Fayyadh subsequently demanded Iraq to be 'cleansed' of US-led forces.²²² The factions of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq are reportedly extreme groups and should not be equated with the PMF as a whole.²²³ However, many of them are reportedly part of the PMF and therefore official security forces who receive government wages.²²⁴

Peshmerga

The Peshmerga are the regional armed forces of the KRI, which have historically been divided into forces under the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and forces under the Patriotic Union of

²¹⁴ NZZ, Für die schiitischen Kämpfer im Irak sind die Amerikaner Besetzer – sie sollen gehen, am besten jetzt [For the Shiite fighters in Iraq, the Americans are occupiers - they should leave, preferably immediately], 6 March 2024, [url](#)

²¹⁵ Rudolf, I., Tracing the Role of the Violent Entrepreneurs in the Iraqi Post-Conflict Economy, New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy, May 2023, [url](#), p. 6

²¹⁶ Arab Weekly (The), Sudani seeks to clip the wings of Hashed forces as he removes militias from Iraqi cities, 16 June 2023, [url](#)

²¹⁷ USDOS, Country Report on Terrorism 2022 – Chapter 5, 30 November 2023, [url](#), p. 130

²¹⁸ Al-Aloosy, M., Iraq's PMF Wants to Be Iran's IRGC, Gulf International Forum, 9 June 2023, [url](#); Arabic Post, على خطى الحرس الثوري.. "شركة المهندس" الزراع الاقتصادية الجديدة لتوسيع نفوذ الحشد الشعبي في العراق [Following in the footsteps of the Revolutionary Guard... "Al-Muhandis Company" is the new economic branch to expand the influence of the PMF in Iraq], 31 January 2023, [url](#)

²¹⁹ Al-Aloosy, M., Iraq's PMF Wants to Be Iran's IRGC, Gulf International Forum, 9 June 2023, [url](#); Smith, C. and Knights, M., Remaking Iraq: How Iranian-Backed Militias Captured the Country, Just Security, 20 March 2023, [url](#)

²²⁰ Porter, L., Islamic Resistance in Iraq appears to be responsible for attacks in the country and there's no end in sight, Atlantic Council, 22 November 2023, [url](#)

²²¹ Reuters, Kataib Hezbollah commander killed in Baghdad in US strike, 9 February 2024, [url](#); Washington Post (The), U.S. strikes in Syria and Iraq kill dozens of militants, 4 February 2024, [url](#)

²²² Rudaw, PMF chief says Iraq must be 'cleansed' of US-led forces, 4 February 2024, [url](#)

²²³ Brookings, How Iraq is managing the Israel-Gaza crisis [Alshamary, M.], 21 December 2023, [url](#)

²²⁴ NZZ, Für die schiitischen Kämpfer im Irak sind die Amerikaner Besetzer – sie sollen gehen, am besten jetzt [For the Shiite fighters in Iraq, the Americans are occupiers - they should leave, preferably immediately], 6 March 2024, [url](#)

Kurdistan (PUK).²²⁵ Approximately 54 000 Peshmerga form units commanded by the KRG Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs (MoPA), while the larger force, about 100 000 troops, 'serve in units directly controlled by either' KDP or PUK.²²⁶ The US has been subsidising payments of Peshmerga serving under the MoPA and has pushed to move the partisan units under a joint MoPA command. However, there has not been much progress due to the continued political divide between the two parties.²²⁷

Kirkuk governorate as well as parts of Ninewa, Erbil, and Diyala governorates are disputed between the central government in Baghdad and the KRG,²²⁸ meaning that a line separating the Peshmerga forces and the ISF stretches 560 Kilometres from Diyala on the border with Iran to the border with Syria in Ninewa governorate,²²⁹ with Peshmerga partly being deployed outside the KRI.²³⁰ In July 2023, the formation of two joint ISF/Peshmerga brigades was announced to fill security gaps in the disputed territories where ISIL sleeper cells were reportedly operating.²³¹ The USDOD noted that one such brigade had begun training as of December 2023 and that Kurdish security forces continued to carry out anti-ISIL operations independently as well as in coordination with the ISF.²³² While at the beginning of October 2023, Iraqi and KRI commanders said that enhanced cooperation in the disputed territories had led to an improved security situation,²³³ only a few weeks later a dispute over the control of a military post vacated by the PKK led to armed clashes between Peshmerga and ISF.²³⁴ The clashes took place in Makhmour district and led to fatalities on both sides.²³⁵

Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)

Since the 1990s, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has been carrying out armed actions against the Turkish army from the Iraq-Iran border area while its top commanders are based in the KRI.²³⁶ Using northern Iraq as a base, it carried out attacks in Türkiye and has been designated a terrorist organisation by the EU and the US.²³⁷ As of January 2022, the PKK had a presence in the north of Dohuk and Erbil governorates along the border with Türkiye, in the Qandil mountains along the border between the KRI and Iran, in the Asos mountains in Sulaymaniyah governorate, in Makhmur district and the Sinjar mountain range in Ninewa

²²⁵ Caggins, M.B., Peshmerga Reforms: Navigating Challenges, Forging Unity, FPRI, 31 October 2023, [url](#); Amwaj.media, Why Iraqi Kurdistan won't have unified army any time soon, 25 October 2022, [url](#)

²²⁶ Al-Monitor, US reduces peshmerga funding amid Iraqi Kurdish political tensions, 4 January 2024, [url](#)

²²⁷ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 25-26; Al-Monitor, US reduces peshmerga funding amid Iraqi Kurdish political tensions, 4 January 2024, [url](#)

²²⁸ Hussein, H.A., Iraq's Disputed Territories and the Potential Impact of the Upcoming Provincial Elections [Map], TWI, 12 December 2023, [url](#)

²²⁹ KirkukNow, Peshmerga ready for Kirkuk, 26 July 2023, [url](#)

²³⁰ Kurdistan24, Peshmerga calls for greater cooperation with Iraqi army amid renewed ISIS attacks, 4 December 2023, [url](#); KirkukNow, Peshmerga ready for Kirkuk, 26 July 2023, [url](#)

²³¹ KirkukNow, Peshmerga ready for Kirkuk, 26 July 2023, [url](#)

²³² USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 26

²³³ Kurdistan24, Iraqi, Kurdish commanders hail improved security in disputed territories, 5 October 2023, [url](#)

²³⁴ AP, Dispute between Iraqi military and Kurdish Peshmerga turns deadly, killing 3, 22 October 2023, [url](#)

²³⁵ Reuters, Four killed in clashes between Iraqi army and Kurdish Peshmerga, security sources say, 22 October 2023, [url](#)

²³⁶ Al-Monitor, Turkey extends flight ban on Iraqi Kurds' Sulaimaniyah airport over alleged PKK support, 3 July 2023, [url](#); Defense Post, (The), Kurdish Militant Group Ends Ceasefire With Turkey, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

²³⁷ Reuters, As Turkey intensifies war on Kurdish militants in Iraq, civilians are suffering, 10 October 2023, [url](#)



governorate.²³⁸ In Sinjar district, the group has security and political influence through local Yazidi militias like the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS),²³⁹ which Türkiye considers to be a PKK branch.²⁴⁰

In June 2023, the PKK declared an end to a ceasefire which it had unilaterally implemented with Türkiye after the earthquake in February 2023.²⁴¹ The group blamed the end of the ceasefire on the killing of a member of an associated militant group in Sulaymaniyah which local Kurdish activists claimed had been carried out by Turkish intelligence services.²⁴² From August 2023 onwards, attacks carried out by the PKK on Turkish military positions or clashes between PKK and Turkish troops were recorded on almost a monthly basis in Northern Iraq.²⁴³ In one such attack, PKK fighters attacked positions of the Turkish army in Northern Iraq and killed at least 12 Turkish soldiers, reportedly constituting one of the largest attacks of the last decade.²⁴⁴

In March 2024, the Iraqi National Security Council officially banned the PKK following a visit by the Turkish foreign and defence ministers to Baghdad, a step which the Turkish government has long been pushing for.²⁴⁵ Media outlet Rudaw maintained that the role of the KRG in this policy shift remained unclear.²⁴⁶

1.5. Impact of the security situation on civilian population

As described in section 0, the security situation in Iraq is characterised by different conflicts and sources of tension. Consequently, different areas of the country have specific security dynamics, trends and patterns. More detailed background information on the geographical overview of the security situation can be found in section 1.3 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#). In addition, the chapters in section [2.Security situation and conflict impact on civilians by governorates](#), of this report address the specific security issues on governorate level, taking into account their specific geographical impact.

²³⁸ Aziz, S. et al., Turkish interventions in its near abroad: The case of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq [Map], Clingendael Netherlands Institute of International Relations, March 2022, [url](#), p. 7

²³⁹ Saleem, Z.A., The Competition for Control in Sinjar: How External Actors and Local Interests Inhibit the Sinjar Agreement, LSE, January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

²⁴⁰ Rudaw, Iraq bans PKK, labeling it a threat to the country, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁴¹ Al-Monitor, Did Kurdish PKK call off truce with Turkey to make peace or war?, 14 June 2023, [url](#)

²⁴² New Arab (The), PKK ends its unilateral ceasefire with Turkey, threatens wide attacks, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

²⁴³ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#)

²⁴⁴ taz, Vergeltung gegen die PKK [Retaliation against the PKK], 26 December 2023, [url](#)

²⁴⁵ Arab Weekly (The), Iraq bans PKK after high-level security talks with Turkey, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁴⁶ Rudaw, Iraq bans PKK, labeling it a threat to the country, 15 March 2024, [url](#)



According to ACLED's conflict exposure measure,²⁴⁷ between 1 February 2023 and 22 March 2024, 16 692 615²⁴⁸ individuals were exposed to conflict due to their proximity to security-related incidents coded as battles, explosions/remote violence or violence against civilians in Iraq.²⁴⁹ ACLED specifies that 'people are harmed by this exposure in different ways: they may be directly injured; they may find themselves in active conflict; they and their group may be targeted; or they may be affected by the destruction of their village, neighborhood, or town.'²⁵⁰

In a September 2023 publication (covering July 2022 -June 2023), OFPRA summarises the geographical distribution of security incidents and their impact on the civilian population, based on its analyses of ACLED data and additional sources, as follows: the security situation in Iraq's capital was shaped by clashes involving federal forces, PMF and ISIL, along with internal PMF disputes. The spread of militias and fragmented local security continued to impact civilians, who faced violence from various unidentified armed groups. More than 10 % of the country's incidents occur in the northern governorates, with a slight decrease in incidents since 2020 due to the decline in ISIL activity. However, a security vacuum, ethno-religious tensions and strategic challenges in contested areas continue to make Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din hotspots for violence, resulting in civilian casualties. Although the southern governorates of Babil, Karbala, Wassit, Qadissiya, Najaf and Muthanna experienced fewer violent incidents than other parts of the country, these figures have remained stable since 2020. Many of the security incidents documented here are reportedly related to unidentified tribal militias and property disputes. In the southern governorates of Basrah, Missan and Thi-Qar, the number of security incidents and civilian casualties is reported to be high. In these areas, the civilian population is exposed to a wide range of violence stemming from organised crime and drug trafficking, the proliferation of local militias and firearms, climatic disasters and social unrest.²⁵¹

With regard to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), CEDOCA reported in September 2023 that the conflict between Türkiye and the PKK in Iraq had led to an increase in violence in the mountainous regions of the KRI. This violence primarily involved Turkish soldiers and PKK guerilla fighters; however, civilians were reportedly also affected, leading to deaths and injuries.²⁵² In September 2023, OFPRA cited sources indicating that, between July 2022 and June 2023, Turkish operations regularly targeted civilian infrastructure or densely populated

²⁴⁷ ACLED's Conflict Exposure Calculator combines information on conflict events from the ACLED database with estimates of population size to estimate the impact on civilians based on factors such as the proximity to an event, the event type, the type of violent actor involved, the geographical location, and the timing of the event. ACLED, Conflict Exposure, n.d., [url](#)

²⁴⁸ This figure indicates ACLED's so-called 'best' estimate, which means that the respective proximity to each security-related incident was selected based on the type and intensity of the incident. For more detailed information on the 'best' estimate, see ACLED, Conflict Exposure, n.d., [url](#)

²⁴⁹ ACLED, Conflict Exposure Calculator [Iraq, 1 February 2022 – 22 March 2023, filtered event types: battles, explosions/remote violence, violence against civilians], accessed 29 March 2023

²⁵⁰ ACLED, Conflict Exposure, n.d., [url](#)

²⁵¹ France, OFPRA, Irak : Veille sécuritaire du 1er juillet 2022 au 30 juin 2023 [Iraq: Security monitoring, 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023], 20 September 2023, [url](#), pp. 11-12

²⁵² Belgium, CEDOCA, Irak: De veiligheidssituatie in de Koerdische Autonome Regio [Iraq: The security situation in the Kurdish Autonomous Region], 28 September 2023, [url](#), p. 19



areas,²⁵³ while Türkiye denied targeting civilians stating that it was trying to avoid civilian casualties by coordinating with the Iraqi authorities.²⁵⁴

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported that it documented 43 293 cases of missing persons between 2003 and 2023. Of these, more than 26 700 cases are still unresolved, a figure that exceeds the Iraqi government's estimate of 16 000 missing Iraqis over the same period by far.²⁵⁵ More recent ICRC data indicated that 994 requests were submitted in the first half of 2023 to find missing relatives.²⁵⁶

Security incidents

Number and type of security incidents

EUAA used the publicly available ACLED curated dataset for Middle East (19 April 2024) for security incidents figures, graphs and maps.²⁵⁷ According to the aforementioned ACLED dataset,²⁵⁸ between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024 there were 6 115 security incidents recorded in Iraq: 1 258 were coded as battles, 4 410 as explosions/remote violence, and 447 as violence against civilians. Most security incidents were recorded in Dohuk (3 441), Erbil (1 015) and Baghdad (361) governorates. The lowest security incidents figures were recorded in Qadissiya (20) Wassit (16) and Karbala (11) governorates.²⁵⁹

²⁵³ France, OFPRA, Irak : Veille sécuritaire du 1er juillet 2022 au 30 juin 2023 [Iraq: Security monitoring, 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023], 20 September 2023, [url](#), p. 23

²⁵⁴ Asharq Al-Awsat, Iraq Rejects Turkish Strikes in Kurdistan Region, Seeks Resolution, 2 October 2023, [url](#)

²⁵⁵ VOA, Thousands Still Missing from 20 Years of Iraq's Turmoil, 9 April 2023, [url](#)

²⁵⁶ ICRC, Iraq: For families of the missing, the pain remains even as the search for answers continues, 30 August 2023, [url](#)

²⁵⁷ ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

²⁵⁸ ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

²⁵⁹ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)



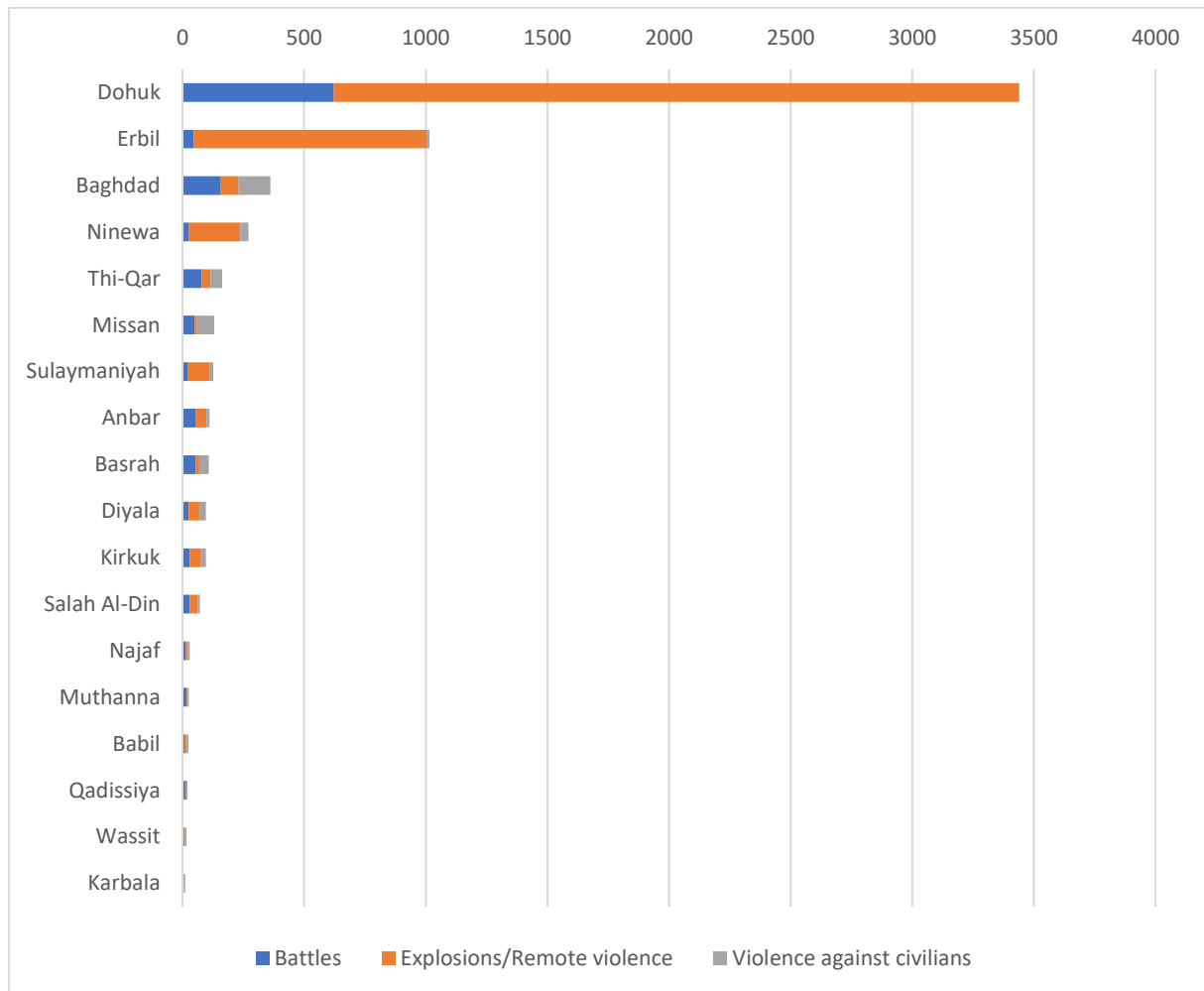


Figure 1. Number of security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians between 1 February 2023 and 31 March November 2024. Breakdown by governorate based on ACLED data.²⁶⁰

Explosions/remote violence, which includes explosive devices, artillery fire and air strikes, is the category with the highest number of individual incidents by far with 4 410 incidents recorded by ACLED between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. The largest number of explosions/remote violence was registered in Dohuk (2 816), followed by Erbil (961) and Ninewa (210) governorates. The lowest number of explosions/remote violence were documented in Karbala (1), Wassit (3) and Babil (9) governorates.²⁶¹

Battles (armed clashes) is the category with the second most registered security incidents. During the reference period, there were 1 258 battles recorded by ACLED. Most battles were recorded in the governorates of Dohuk (622), Baghdad (157), and Thi-Qar (78). The lowest number of battles were recorded in Karbala (5), Babil (7), and Wassit (7).²⁶²

²⁶⁰ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

²⁶¹ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

²⁶² EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

The third largest category of incidents is violence against civilians with 447 incidents recorded by ACLED between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Most incidents during the year were recorded in Baghdad (130), Missan (70) and Thi-Qar (47) governorates. The lowest number of incidents were recorded in Dohuk (3) and Qadissiya (3) governorates.²⁶³

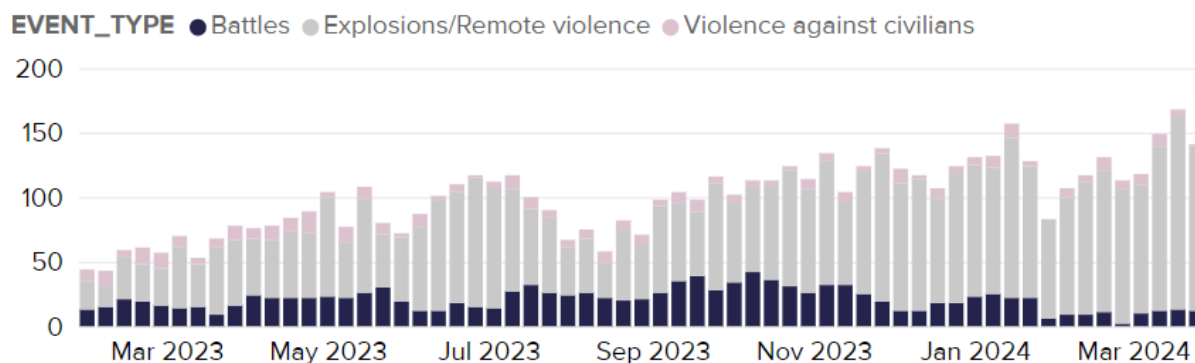


Figure 2. Weekly evolution of security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Iraq between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, based on ACLED data.²⁶⁴

By contrast, for the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 282 security events leading to fatalities²⁶⁵ in Iraq (see Figure 3). The largest number of events were recorded in Dohuk governorate (76) followed by Erbil (25) and Sulaymaniyah (22) governorates. For 75 of the events recorded by the UCDP, the exact location within a governorate was not specified. Most of these events (70 out of 75) were reported in the Qandil Mountains and Northern Kurdistan areas of Iraq. During the indicated reference period, the UCDP did not record any events resulting in fatalities in the governorates of Basrah, Missan, Muthanna, Najaf, Wassit, Qadissiya and Karbala.²⁶⁶

²⁶³ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

²⁶⁴ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

²⁶⁵ UCDP records only incidents where armed force was used by an organised actor against another organized actor, or against civilians, resulting in at least 1 direct death at a specific location and a specific date. UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, [url](#), p. 4

²⁶⁶ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

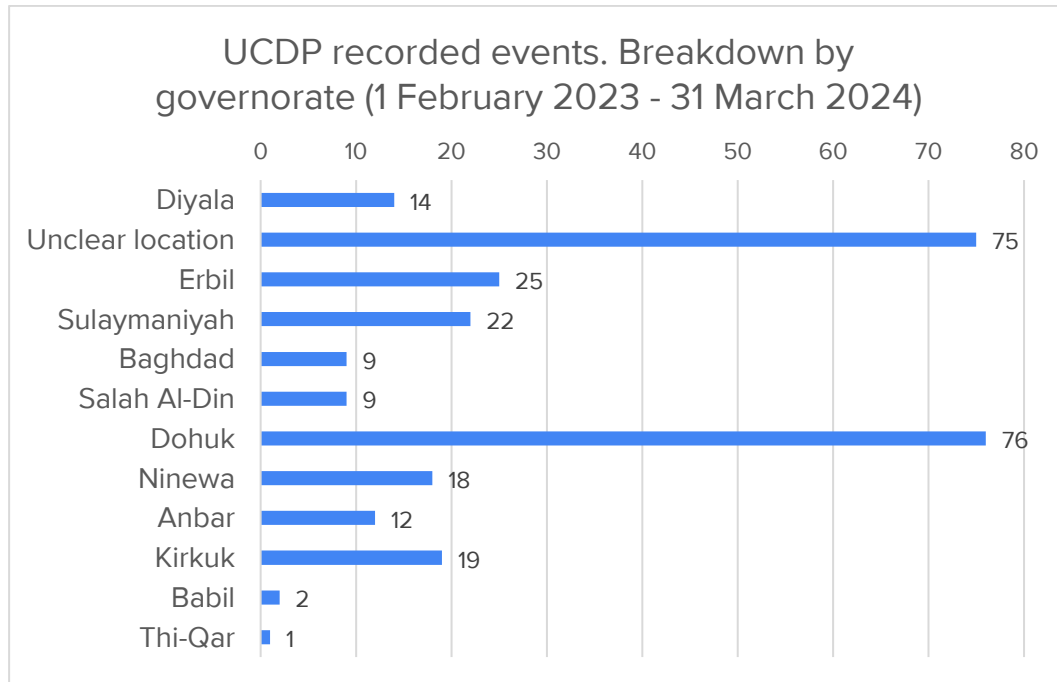


Figure 3. Events leading to fatalities recorded by the UCDP between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by governorate.²⁶⁷

Between 1 February 2023 and 29 February 2024, Musings on Iraq²⁶⁸ documented 123 attacks attributed to ISIL and 105 attacks attributed to pro-Iranian groups, with the former declining steadily compared to 2022 and the latter declining again in February 2024 after a significant increase between October 2023 and January 2024.²⁶⁹

As of mid-March 2024, Airwars, an organisation that monitors and evaluates claims of civilian casualties from international military action (mainly air and artillery strikes),²⁷⁰ reported 13 incidents with civilian harm allegations since 1 February 2023, of which one was attributed to US forces, one to the US-led coalition forces and the remaining 11 to the Turkish military.²⁷¹ In a report published in November 2023 (covering the period between October 2021 and September 2023), the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs identified Turkish airstrikes in the KRI as the most notable incidents of violence nationwide.²⁷² Throughout the reference period of this report (February 2023 – March 2024), Turkish airstrikes were reported,²⁷³ some of which

²⁶⁷ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

²⁶⁸ Musings on Iraq is a blog by Joel Wind, that specialises on the 'politics, economics, security, culture and history of Iraq'. Blogger, Joel Wing, n.d., [url](#)

²⁶⁹ Musings on Iraq, Violence Almost Disappears In Iraq In March 2024, 4 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁷⁰ Airwars, Who we are, n.d., [url](#)

²⁷¹ Airwars, Turkish military in Iraq & Syria, as of 11 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁷² Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen ambtsbericht Irak [Country report Iraq], November 2023, [url](#), p. 18

²⁷³ Al Jazeera, Turkish air strikes target northern Iraq and Syria, 16 January 2024, [url](#); AP, Turkey steps up airstrikes against Kurdish groups in Syria and Iraq after 12 soldiers were killed, 25 December 2023, [url](#); Reuters, As Turkey intensifies war on Kurdish militants in Iraq, civilians are suffering, 10 October 2023, [url](#)

reportedly resulted in civilian casualties.²⁷⁴ In October 2023, it was reported that the frequency of Turkish airstrikes had increased in recent years and extended further into Iraqi territory.²⁷⁵ Türkiye's military operations in the Kurdish region have reportedly been criticised for often leaving civilian lives and property stuck in the crossfire.²⁷⁶

Type of weapons and tactics used

According to the reports by the UNSG covering the reference period, the majority of civilian casualties were caused by explosive remnants of war (ERW),²⁷⁷ followed by 'small arms fire, complex attacks and improvised explosive devices' between 1 January and 31 March 2023²⁷⁸ and by 'improvised explosive devices, small arms fire and air attacks' in the period from 1 April to 31 August 2023.²⁷⁹ The UNSG report covering 1 September 2023 to 31 December 2023 listed air strikes as the second most common cause of civilian casualties.²⁸⁰

The surge in Iranian-backed groups' attacks on US target in Iraq has seen a tactical shift, often involving drones and missiles, targeting the same locations in a single day. Drones have reportedly been the primary tool in these recent attacks, with their use more than doubling in 2023 compared to 2021 and 2022 combined. Meanwhile, the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) has fallen dramatically, with only one reported IED attack against US targets in 2023.²⁸¹ In retaliatory US attacks on Iran-linked targets in early February 2024, which affected both civilian and security areas, 16 people, including civilians, were killed and 25 wounded, according to the Iraqi government.²⁸²

Civilian casualties

In 2023, UNAMI documented at least 153 civilian casualties resulting from armed conflict-related incidents in Iraq, 57 % less than in 2022 and of 81 % less than in 2021 (see Figure 4). For the first three months of 2024, UNAMI documented 49 civilian casualties.²⁸³

²⁷⁴ Rudaw, Iraq bans PKK, labeling it a threat to the country, 15 March 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Two civilians killed in Turkish air strike in northern Iraq, security sources say, 8 March 2024, [url](#); New Arab (The), Two killed in Iraq strike blamed on Turkey, 21 February 2024, [url](#); HRW, World Report 2024 – Iraq, 11 January 2024, [url](#); Fair Observer, Turkey Killed Iraqi Civilians—Where Is the Uproar?, 24 August 2023, [url](#);

²⁷⁵ Reuters, As Turkey intensifies war on Kurdish militants in Iraq, civilians are suffering, 10 October 2023, [url](#)

²⁷⁶ Rudaw, Turkey to 'secure' Iraq border in the summer, says Erdogan, 4 March 2023, [url](#)

²⁷⁷ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 58; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 52; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 50

²⁷⁸ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 50

²⁷⁹ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 52

²⁸⁰ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 58

²⁸¹ Jahanbani, N. et al., How Iranian-Backed Militias Do Political Signaling, Lawfare, 18 December 2023, [url](#)

²⁸² Al Jazeera, Iraq says 16 people, including civilians, killed in 'new US aggression', 3 February 2024, [url](#)

²⁸³ UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

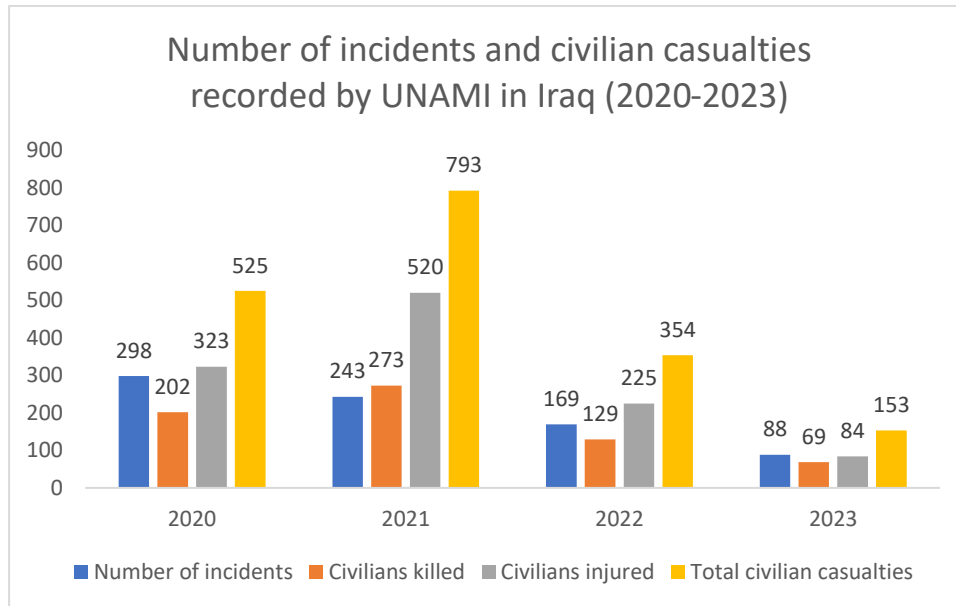


Figure 4. Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded in Iraq by UNAMI (2020-2023).²⁸⁴

In 2023, Iraq Body Count (IBC), an independent data project that documents violent civilian deaths caused by US-led coalition forces, Iraqi government forces or paramilitary or criminal attacks by others in Iraq,²⁸⁵ documented at least 537 civilian deaths due to violence, 27 % less than in 2022 and 20 % less than in 2021. For the first three months of 2024, the same source documented 119 civilian deaths.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

²⁸⁵ IBC, About the Iraq Body Count project, n.d., [url](#)

²⁸⁶ IBC, Documented civilian deaths from violence, accessed 2 April 2024

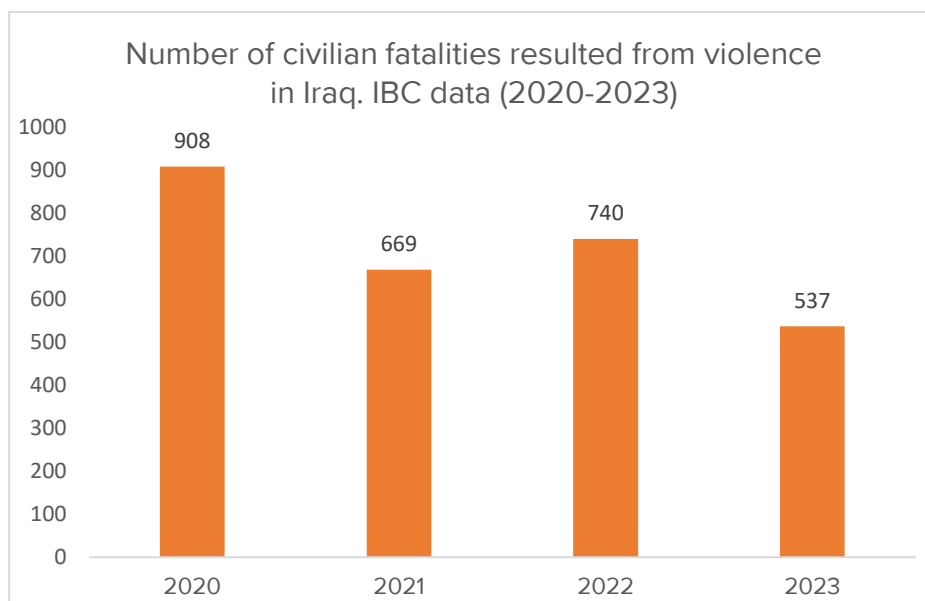


Figure 5. Number of civilian fatalities resulted from violence in Iraq. Iraq Body County data (2020-2023).

For the reference period of this report (1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024), UNAMI documented a total of 95 incidents resulting in at least 188 civilian casualties, including 78 dead and 110 wounded (see Figure 6).

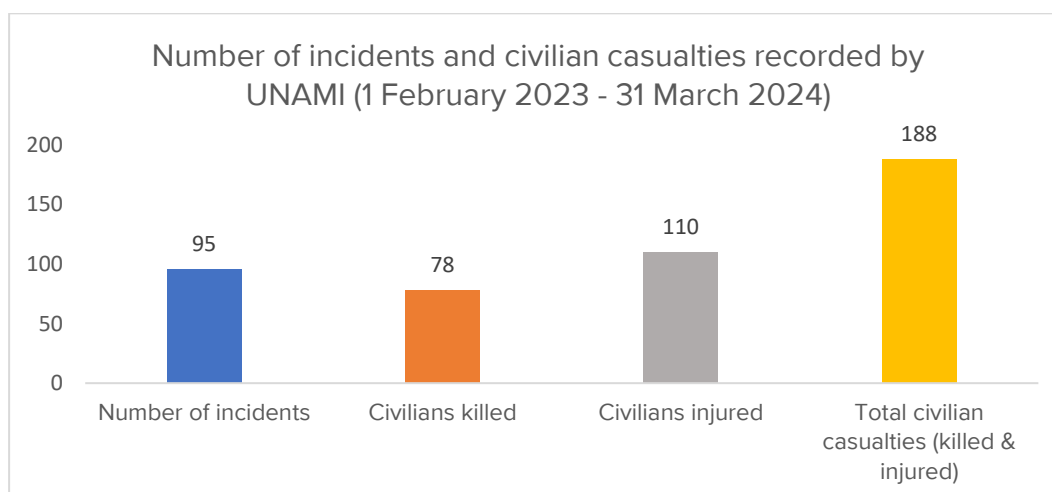


Figure 6. Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded in Iraq by UNAMI between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.²⁸⁷

Broken down by gender, age and police, UNAMI data shows that 7 women, 44 men and 27 children were killed (22 boys and 5 girls) during the reference period (see Figure 7).

²⁸⁷ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

Number of incidents	Women casualties		Children casualties ²⁸⁸		Police casualties ²⁸⁹		Civilian men casualties		Total civilian casualties (killed + injured)
	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured	
95	7	12	27 (22M,5F)	36 (31M,5F)	0	2	44	60	188

Figure 7. Civilian casualties recorded in Iraq by UNAMI between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by age, gender and police.²⁹⁰

The majority of civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI were caused by unexploded ordnances (UXOs), explosive remnants of war (ERWs), air attacks, mortars and rockets, and small arms fire (see Figure 8).²⁹¹

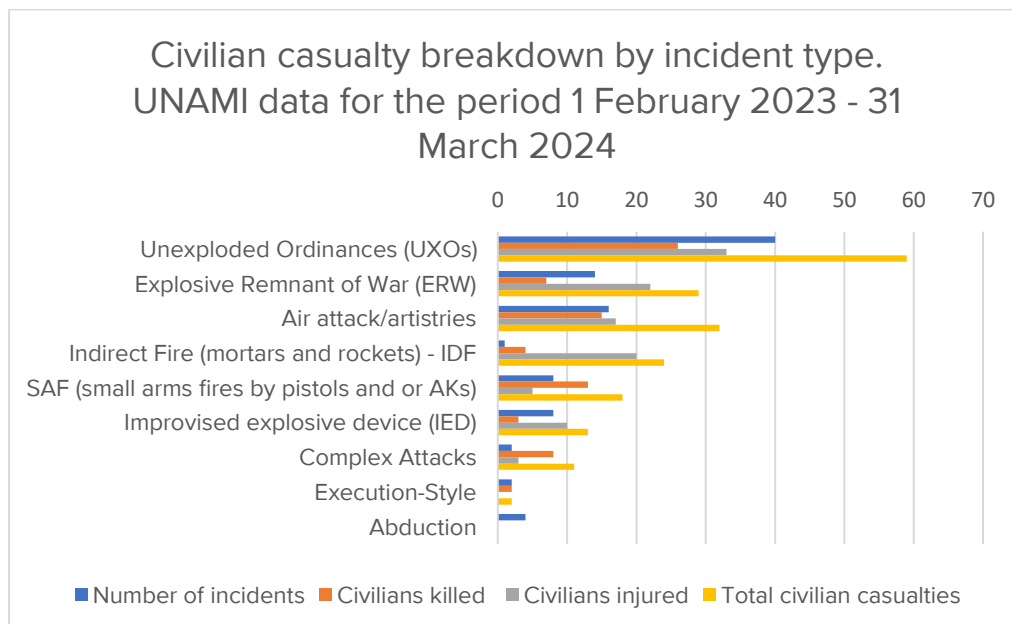


Figure 8. Civilian casualty figures by incident type. UNAMI data for the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.²⁹²

According to UNAMI data (see Figure 9), the highest number of civilian casualties recorded during the reference period was in Diyala governorate (43, including 21 deaths), followed by Erbil (38, including 11 deaths), Ninewa (33, including 11 deaths), and Dohuk (12, including 7

²⁸⁸ "M" for Male and "F" for Female.

²⁸⁹ Iraqi police due to their civilian functions related to law enforcement at the time of the incident are considered as civilians (not directly taking part in hostilities – DPIH))

²⁹⁰ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

²⁹¹ UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

²⁹² EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

deaths). No civilian casualties were recorded in the governorates of Baghdad, Babil, and Karbala.²⁹³

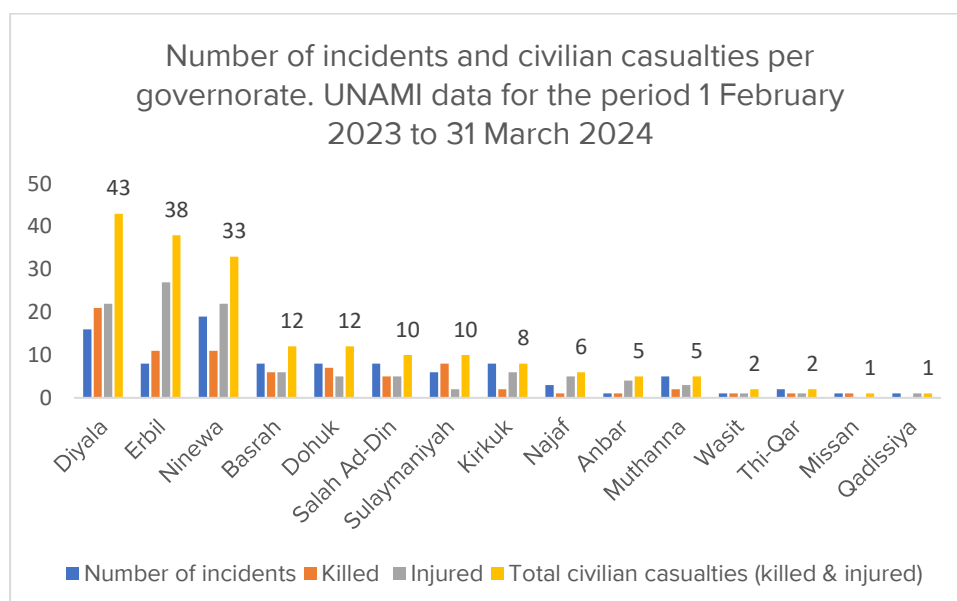


Figure 9. Number of incidents and civilian casualties per governorate. UNAMI data for the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.²⁹⁴

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 282 events leading to 597 casualties out of which 50 were civilian deaths. The largest number of civilian deaths was recorded in the governorates of Diyala (22) and Erbil (4). There were also 9 civilian deaths recorded by UCDP in the KRI without being able to attribute a precise location in one of the governorates. UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in the governorates of Babil, Kirkuk, Thi-Qar, Basrah, Missan, Muthanna, Najaf, Wasit, Qadissiya, and Karbala.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

²⁹⁴ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

²⁹⁵ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

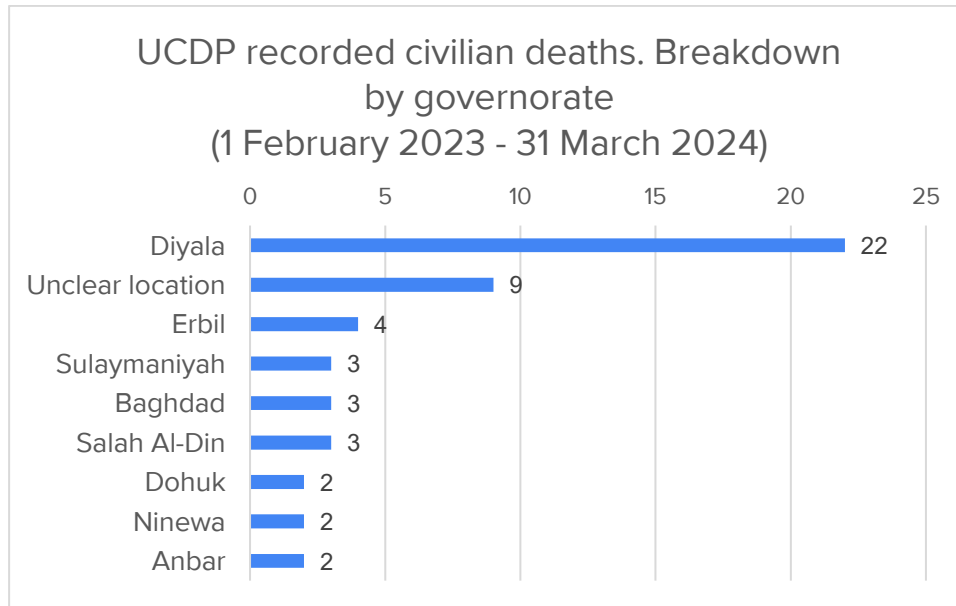


Figure 10. Civilian deaths recorded by the UCDP between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by governorate.²⁹⁶

Iraq Body Count (IBC) reported a maximum of 571 civilians killed for the period between February 2023 and February 2024. During this period, the highest monthly death toll was reported for April 2023 with 86 civilians killed, followed by March 2023 with 76.²⁹⁷

According to Musings on Iraq, between 1 February 2023 and 29 February 2024, 91 people were killed and 164 injured in the above-mentioned attacks (see section [Security incidents](#)) by ISIL and pro-Iranian groups, with November 2023 being the month with the most casualties (15 dead, 29 injured).²⁹⁸

Of the 13 incidents documented by Airwars as ‘incidents with allegations of civilian harm’, none were categorised as having ‘confirmed civilian harm status’.²⁹⁹

Regarding the impact of the Turkish-PKK conflict in northern Iraq on the civilian population, an Iraqi security expert told CEDOCA in June 2023 that both parties to the conflict aim not to terrorise or displace the civilian population living in this sparsely populated and very mountainous area. Both the PKK and the Turkish armed forces are in a delicate situation: both are operating on foreign territory and must try not to antagonise the population too much.³⁰⁰ A

²⁹⁶ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

²⁹⁷ IBC, Documented civilian deaths from violence, as of 18 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁹⁸ Musings on Iraq, Violence Almost Disappears In Iraq In March 2024, 4 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁹⁹ Airwars, Turkish military in Iraq & Syria, as of 11 March 2024, [url](#)

³⁰⁰ Belgium, CEDOCA, Irak: De veiligheidssituatie in de Koerdische Autonome Regio [Iraq: The security situation in the Kurdish Autonomous Region] [source: expert on the security situation in Iraq, interviewed in June 2023, identity and location not disclosed to ensure the safety of this source], 28 September 2023, [url](#), p. 17

July 2023 CPT report³⁰¹ found 2022 to be the ‘deadliest year since 2015 for civilians in Northern Iraq under Turkish military bombardments’.³⁰²

Regarding the number of civilian casualties caused by explosive violence in 2022,³⁰³ Action on Armed Violence (AOAV)³⁰⁴ reported in April 2023 that with 885 casualties and a 43 % increase compared to 2021, ‘Iraq saw the highest level of civilian harm recorded since 2018’. This was due to a ‘723 % increase in civilians harmed in ground-launched attacks by non-state and unknown actors’ (61 in 2021; 502 in 2022) and a ‘398% increase in civilian casualties of air-launched weapons’ (43 in 2021; 214 in 2022), mostly carried out by state actors.³⁰⁵

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

Years of insecurity and stability concerns have resulted in significant damage to infrastructure.³⁰⁶ Apart from ACAPS³⁰⁷ reporting, for the period between November 2022 and June 2023, that public infrastructure continued to be the target of ‘sporadic attacks by armed groups and frequent air strikes’ against the PKK,³⁰⁸ no further publicly available information could be found on recent damage to civilian infrastructure caused by the conflict during the reference period. In the reference period, wildfires resulting from aerial bombardments were reported and local residents complained of aerial attacks causing destruction of agricultural land and farms.³⁰⁹ Most reports on this subject deal with reconstruction efforts. Information on reconstruction efforts and related issues is outlined in the following paragraphs.

Despite reconstruction efforts, the need for humanitarian assistance persisted in Iraq, particularly for those returning to ‘remote, disputed areas with few services’.³¹⁰ In July 2023, ACAPS reported that the majority of IDPs living in host communities were not able to return to their former homes due to a lack of infrastructure repairs.³¹¹ For more information on displacement, see section [Conflict-induced displacement and return](#). In line with this, in an August 2023 report focusing on Ninewa governorate, IOM described the destruction of homes as a major obstacle for IDPs to return to their places of origin,³¹² while USDOS, focusing on Yazidi IDPs in Dohuk, cited the ‘lack of reconstruction plans or public services’ in this regard.³¹³ According to IOM, this suggests that initiatives focused on housing reconstruction

³⁰¹ Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT) describes itself as ‘an international violence-reduction and human rights organization.’ CPT, About us, n.d., [url](#)

³⁰² CPT, Civilian Casualties of Turkish Bombardments in Northern Iraq in 2022, 31 July 2023, [url](#)

³⁰³ Please note that at the time of writing, only the 2023 published annual report (Explosive Violence Monitor 2022) containing the figures for 2022 was available. Figures covering 2023 were expected to be published in the course of 2024.

³⁰⁴ AOAV is a research and advocacy organisation that records incidents and resulting casualties caused by explosive weapons at the global level. For more information about AOAV see AOAV, What do we do?, n.d., [url](#)

³⁰⁵ AOAV, Explosive Violence Monitor 2022, 24 April 2023, [url](#), p. 11

³⁰⁶ UNICEF, Climate Landscape Analysis For Children And Young People In Iraq, August 2023, [url](#), p. 2

³⁰⁷ ACAPS describes itself as an ‘independent analytical’ organisation that monitors the humanitarian situation in crisis areas around the world to help ‘humanitarian workers, influencers, fundraisers, and donors make better-informed decisions and respond more effectively to disasters’. ACAPS, Who we are, n.d., [url](#)

³⁰⁸ ACAPS, Humanitarian Access Overview, July 2023, [url](#), p. 18

³⁰⁹ Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, [url](#)

³¹⁰ UNICEF, Iraq, 12 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

³¹¹ ACAPS, Humanitarian Access Overview, July 2023, [url](#), p. 18

³¹² IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Progress Toward Durable Solutions in Iraq, August 2023, [url](#), p. 6

³¹³ USDOS, 2022 Country Reports on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 15

and livelihood ‘would improve conditions to support sustainable returns’.³¹⁴ For more information on conflict-induced displacement and return, please see section [Conflict-induced displacement and return](#) of this report.

Hamzeh Hadad stated in May 2023 that ‘reconstruction programmes are underway’ in many areas adjacent to Sinjar, Al-Baaj (both Ninewa governorate) and Khanaqin districts (Diyala governorate) previously controlled by ISIL.³¹⁵ In January 2024, the Iraqi Ministry of Finance reportedly issued its third tranche of reconstruction bonds, amounting to 2 trillion Iraqi dinars [approximately 1.4 billion EUR³¹⁶].³¹⁷ In April 2023, Iraq’s Prime Minister launched a reconstruction campaign in Sinjar, allocating 50 billion Iraqi dinars [approximately 35.3 million EUR³¹⁸] to the project. However, ongoing disputes between the Iraqi central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) have stalled the use of previously allocated funds. As a result, damaged infrastructure and inadequate services continued to hinder the return of more than 200 000 displaced persons, including a significant portion of the Yazidi minority. In this context, Sarah Sanbar, Iraq researcher at Human Rights Watch, stressed that the ‘allocation of funds is a positive development’ only if these funds are actually invested, while political power struggles prevents ‘the use of available funds’ and leave the inhabitants of Sinjar in limbo.³¹⁹ A July 2023 Al Jazeera article outlining the adopted Iraqi budgets for 2023-2025 referred to the budget plans as being forward-looking and emphasising infrastructure and reconstruction, but also mentioned that ‘Iraq does not have the best record in spending its federal budget’.³²⁰

Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) / Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) and landmines

In July 2023, ACAPS reported that although security conditions had improved in the first half of 2023, the continued presence of landmines and ERW still posed challenges to movement and recovery efforts in some areas of the country.³²¹ In its Humanitarian Transition Overview for 2023, UNOCHA noted that – with approximately 2 530 square kilometres of land contaminated by explosive ordnance (EO) – EO remained a security threat, limiting access to productive land and preventing IDPs from returning to affected areas.³²² In this context, UNOCHA described the removal of EO from residential and agricultural areas as ‘critical to the creation of conditions for sustainable returns’.³²³ For further information on conflict-induced displacement and return, please see section [Conflict-induced displacement and return](#) of this report.

³¹⁴ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Progress Toward Durable Solutions in Iraq, August 2023, [url](#), p. 6

³¹⁵ Hadad, H., From shock and awe to stability and flaws: Iraq’s post-invasion journey, ECFR, 25 May 2023, [url](#)

³¹⁶ Exchange rates from European Commission, Exchange rate (InforEuro), n.d., [url](#), accessed on 20 March 2024

³¹⁷ Iraq-Business News, Iraq Issues \$1.5bn Reconstruction Bonds, 8 January 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: January 4 – 11, 2024, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

³¹⁸ Exchange rates from European Commission, Exchange rate (InforEuro), n.d., [url](#), accessed on 20 March 2024

³¹⁹ HRW, Iraq: Political Infighting Blocking Reconstruction of Sinjar, 6 June 2023, [url](#)

³²⁰ Al Jazeera, Analysis: Iraq’s new budget may hamper more than it helps, 26 June 2023, [url](#)

³²¹ ACAPS, Humanitarian Access Overview, July 2023, [url](#), p. 18

³²² UNOCHA, 2023 Humanitarian Transition Overview: Iraq, 27 February 2023, [url](#), p. 9

³²³ UNOCHA, 2023 Humanitarian Transition Overview: Iraq, 27 February 2023, [url](#), p. 15



During the reference period (February 2023 to 28 March 2024), EPIC, the Enabling Peace in Iraq Centre, documented 76 IED and ERW incidents with civilian and non-civilian³²⁴ casualties. These 76 incidents resulted in 103 people injured, and 58 others killed.³²⁵

In November 2023, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL)³²⁶ reported that Iraq faced improvised landmine contamination in areas recaptured from ISIL, as well as ongoing contamination from mines remaining from the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War, the 1991 Gulf War, and the 2003 US-led coalition invasion. By the end of 2022,³²⁷ Iraq reportedly accounted for 1 189.09 square kilometres of contamination from anti-personnel mines and a further 530.8 square kilometres from IEDs, including improvised mines, mainly in areas controlled by the Federal Government of Iraq.³²⁸

In terms of cluster munition contamination, the Regional Mine Action Center for Southern Iraq stated that, as of February 2023, a total area of 174.13 square kilometres was contaminated in the four southern governorates of Basrah, Missan, Muthanna and Thi-Qar, with the highest contamination in Muthanna (81.78 square kilometres). In the Middle Euphrates region, 4.48 square kilometres of cluster munitions contamination was reported, and 10.99 square kilometres in the country's north. Thus, the total area contaminated by cluster munitions in Iraq amounts to 189.6 square kilometres, an increase of 11.46 square kilometres compared to 2021, due to 'newly discovered and surveyed contaminated areas'. In the KRI, no Suspected Hazardous Areas (SHA) or Confirmed Hazardous Areas (CHA) were identified.³²⁹

³²⁴ Please note that EPIC does not specifically distinguish between civilian and non-civilian victims in its tables on casualties of IEDs and ERW; see for example, EPIC, ISHM: January 18 – January 25, 2024, 25 January 2024, [url](#)

³²⁵ Figures based on EPIC's Iraq Security and Humanitarian Monitor (ISHM) weekly reports that documented IED or ERW incidents with casualties (and added up by the drafter): EPIC, ISHM: March 21 – 28, 2024, 28 March 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: March 14 – 21, 2024, 21 March 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: March 7 – 14, 2024, 14 March 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: February 29 – March 7, 2024, 7 March 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: February 22 – February 29, 2024, 29 February 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: January 18 – January 25, 2024, 25 January 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: January 11 – 18, 2024, 18 January 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: January 4 – 11, 2024, 11 January 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: December 28, 2023 – January 4, 2024, 4 January 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: December 14 – 28, 2023, 28 December 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: November 9 – 16, 2023, 16 November 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: October 26 – November 2, 2023, 2 November 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: September 21 – 28, 2023, 28 September 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: September 14 – 21, 2023, 21 September 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: September 7 – 14, 2023, 14 September 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: August 31 – September 7, 2023, 7 September 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: August 17 – 24, 2023, 24 August 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: August 10 – 17, 2023, 17 August 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: July 27 – August 10, 2023, 10 August 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: July 20 – 27, 2023, 27 July 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: July 13 – 20, 2023, 20 July 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: July 6 – 13, 2023, 13 July 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: June 15 – 22, 2023, 22 June 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: June 1 – 8, 2023, 8 June 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: May 25 – June 1, 2023, 1 June 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: May 11 – 18, 2023, 18 May 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: May 4 – 11, 2023, 11 May 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: April 27 – May 4, 2023, 4 May 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: April 13 – 20, 2023, 20 April 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: April 6 – 13, 2023, 13 April 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: March 30 – April 6, 2023, 6 April 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: March 16 – 30, 2023, 30 March 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: March 2 – 9, 2023, 9 March 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: February 23 – March 2, 2023, 2 March 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: February 16 – 23, 2023, 23 February 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: February 2 – 9, 2023, 9 February 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: January 26 – February 2, 2023, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

³²⁶ ICBL describes itself as 'a global network of non-governmental organizations, active in some 100 countries, that works for a world free of antipersonnel landmines, where landmine survivors can lead fulfilling lives.' ICBL, About us, n.d., [url](#)

³²⁷ Please note that at the time of writing, only the 2023 published annual report (Landmine Monitor 2023) containing the figures for 2022 was available. Figures covering 2023 were expected to be published in the course of 2024.

³²⁸ ICBL, Landmine Monitor 2023, November 2023, [url](#), p. 42

³²⁹ CMC, Cluster Munition Monitor 2023, 5 September 2023, [url](#), p. 51



According to the UNSG, mine clearance continued in Iraq³³⁰ with a total of 1.9 million square metres cleared of EO by the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Basrah and Ninewa governorates between 25 January 2023 and 25 January 2024.³³¹

As the UNSG indicated in reports covering the period from 25 January 2023 to 25 January 2024, ERW were responsible for the majority of civilian casualties.³³² Between 11 May and 31 December 2023, the country task force on monitoring and reporting grave violations against children in armed conflict documented the killing of 10 boys and 2 girls and the maiming of 14 boys and 1 girl due to ERW.³³³

By the end of 2022,³³⁴ with a total of 3 175 cluster munition-related deaths, Iraq ranked third among the countries with the ‘highest number of casualties, for all time,’ in the Cluster Munition Monitor dataset.³³⁵ A September 2023 publication by the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC)³³⁶ stated that in 2022 the annual number of casualties from cluster munition remnants in Iraq had increased, with 41 casualties in 2022 compared to 33 in 2021 and 31 in 2020, reaching the highest annual number since 2010. In 2022, the majority of victims of cluster munitions remnants in Iraq were children.³³⁷ In November 2023, ICBL reported that mines and ERW caused 169 casualties in Iraq in 2022.³³⁸

For more detailed information on ERW/UXO contamination in the different governorates, please see the regional chapters in section [2. Security situation and conflict impact on civilians by governorates](#).

Conflict-induced displacement and return

In terms of various drivers of displacement, Iraq is described as an ‘example of how conflict-induced migration compounds with other drivers such as water scarcity, the absence of cooperation around the management of limited water resources, lack of economic opportunities and environmental degradation’.³³⁹

³³⁰ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 71

³³¹ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 74; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 70; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 71

³³² UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 58; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 52; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 50

³³³ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 59; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 55

³³⁴ Please note that at the time of writing, only the 2023 published annual report (Cluster Munition Monitor 2023) containing the figures for 2022 was available. Figures covering 2023 were expected to be published in the course of 2024.

³³⁵ CMC, Cluster Munition Monitor 2023, 5 September 2023, [url](#), p. 45

³³⁶ CMC describes itself as ‘a global civil society campaign working to eradicate cluster munitions, prevent further casualties and put an end to the suffering caused by these weapons.’ CMC, About us, n.d., [url](#)

³³⁷ CMC, Cluster Munition Monitor 2023, 5 September 2023, [url](#), pp. 48-49

³³⁸ ICBL, Landmine Monitor 2023 [Table], November 2023, [url](#), p. 54

³³⁹ ESCWA, Trends and Impacts in Conflict Settings No. 7: Climate, peace and security in the Arab region, 2 November 2023, [url](#), p. 34



Years after the official defeat of ISIL in Iraq, more than 1 million Iraqis remain internally displaced,³⁴⁰ primarily in the KRI.³⁴¹ In April 2023, the last official IDP camp in federal Iraq was closed by the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displacement ‘with little advance notice and despite concerns about camp residents’ safety in their areas of origin’.³⁴² Areas where residents were forced to flee at the outset of the war against ISIL continue to experience a security vacuum, and the risk of attacks continues to make returning difficult for its residents. In early 2023, ‘the largest increase in displacement’ reportedly took place in disputed areas, including cases of secondary displacement due to the resurgence of violence; the ‘places that have seen further displacement’ were Sinjar district (Ninewa governorate), Al-Baaj district (Ninewa governorate), and Khanaqin (Diyala governorate).³⁴³

In its country profile on Iraq, IDMC categorised three of its internal displacement updates between February 2023 and March 2024 as conflict-related,³⁴⁴ including the evacuation of approximately 116 households from four villages in Amadiya district (Dohuk governorate) due to Turkish airstrikes in January 2024³⁴⁵ and the displacement of 44 people due to fear of violence between 26 September and 10 October 2023 to Sinjar and Al-Baaj (Ninewa governorate).³⁴⁶ As of January 2024, HRW reported that 60 % of Sinjar’s population remained displaced since 2014. Factors such as ongoing regional insecurity due to Turkish airstrikes and ‘competition between armed groups’, as well as slow reconstruction and lack of government compensation, hinder their return.³⁴⁷

IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)³⁴⁸ unit stated in its Iraq Master List Report 131 (covering the period September – December 2023) that, as of 31 December 2023, 1 123 663 individuals were reportedly displaced across the country. They were located in 18 governorates, 104 districts, and 2 610 locations in Iraq, with a decrease of 18 351 IDPs or 1.6 % compared to the number of IDPs recorded in the previous reporting round (covering May – August 2023).³⁴⁹ As of 31 December 2023, the governorates hosting the largest numbers of IDPs were reported to be Ninewa (239 124 IDPs), Dohuk (235 251 IDPs) and Erbil (225 565 IDPs).³⁵⁰

³⁴⁰ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, IRAQ Master List Report 131 (September-December 2023), March 2024, [url](#), p. 1; HRW, World Report 2024 – Iraq, 11 January 2024, [url](#); Hadad, H., From shock and awe to stability and flaws: Iraq’s post-invasion journey, ECFR, 25 May 2023, [url](#)

³⁴¹ HRW, World Report 2024 – Iraq, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

³⁴² HRW, World Report 2024 – Iraq, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

³⁴³ Hadad, H., From shock and awe to stability and flaws: Iraq’s post-invasion journey, ECFR, 25 May 2023, [url](#)

³⁴⁴ IDMC, Iraq: Internal Displacement Updates, as of 26 March 2024, [url](#)

³⁴⁵ Rudaw, الطائرات التركية تقصف 4 قرى خالية في العمادية [Turkish warplanes bomb 4 empty villages in Amadiyah], 18 January 2024, [url](#)

³⁴⁶ IDMC, Iraq: Internal Displacement Updates, as of 26 March 2024, [url](#)

³⁴⁷ HRW, World Report 2024 – Iraq, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

³⁴⁸ Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

³⁴⁹ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, IRAQ Master List Report 131 (September-December 2023), March 2024, [url](#), p. 1

³⁵⁰ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, IRAQ Master List Report 131 (September-December 2023), March 2024, [url](#), p. 3



HIGHLIGHTS

Figure 1: Number of IDPs and returnees over time



Figure 11: Displacement Tracking Matrix, IRAQ Master List Report 131 (September-December 2023), March 2024, © IOM.³⁵¹

Although a general decrease in the number of IDPs across the country was reported, IOM documented 6 394 newly displaced persons during the period between September and December 2023. 93 % of these cases involved IDPs experiencing secondary displacement. In addition, between September and December 2023, 406 cases of failed return were reported, the majority of which involved persons originating from the districts of Sinjar, Fallujah and Al-Baaj.³⁵²

In terms of return, IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) identified 4 863 072 individual returnees, as of 31 December 2023, depicting an increase of 17 010 individuals or 0.4 % compared to the previous reporting round (covering May – August 2023). Between September and December 2023, Baiji district (Salah Al-Din governorate) and Al-Baaj district (Ninewa governorate) saw the highest increase in people returning;³⁵³ the governorates with the highest number of individuals returning were Ninewa (1 960 734 returnees) and Anbar governorate (1 548 936 returnees).³⁵⁴ In July 2023, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) reported that almost five million people previously displaced due to conflict have already been ‘able to return to their areas of origin’.³⁵⁵

³⁵¹ IOM, IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, IRAQ Master List Report 131 (September-December 2023), March 2024, [url](#)

³⁵² IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, IRAQ Master List Report 131 (September-December 2023), March 2024, [url](#), p. 2

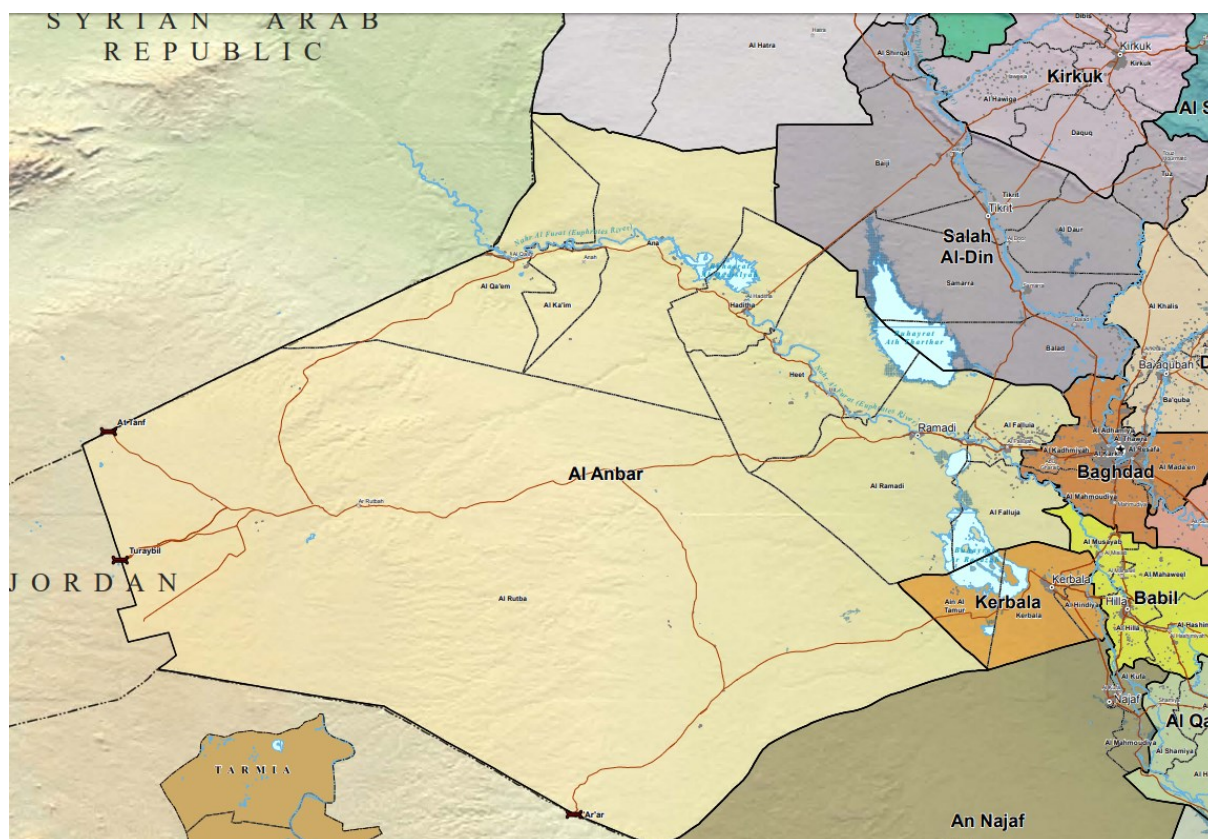
³⁵³ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, IRAQ Master List Report 131 (September-December 2023), March 2024, [url](#), p. 1

³⁵⁴ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, IRAQ Master List Report 131 (September-December 2023), March 2024, [url](#), p. 7

³⁵⁵ IRC, IRC Protection Needs Overview: Monitoring and Trends; October 2022 – March 2023, 3 July 2023, [url](#), p. 4

2. Security situation and conflict impact on civilians by governorates

2.1. Anbar



Map 2: Anbar governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads , © United Nations.³⁵⁶

General description of governorate

The governorate of Anbar is situated in western Iraq and has borders with Ninewa, Salah Al-Din, Baghdad, Babil, and Karbala governorates. In the west, it borders three of Iraq's neighbouring countries: Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.³⁵⁷ Anbar is Iraq's largest governorate and is one of the most sparsely populated regions in the country.³⁵⁸ The governorate features vast desert terrain.³⁵⁹ The districts of Anbar include Al-Qaim (Al Kaim), Al-Rutba, Ana, Falluja (Al

³⁵⁶ UN IAU, Iraq District Map, January 2014, [url](#)

³⁵⁷ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Al-Anbar Governorate Reference Map 2020, 27 May 2020, [url](#)

³⁵⁸ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#); UN IAU, Anbar Governorate Profile, March 2009, [url](#), accessed 5 February 2024, p. 1

³⁵⁹ UN IAU, Anbar Governorate Profile, March 2009, [url](#), accessed 5 February 2024, p. 1

Falluja), Haditha, Heet (Hit³⁶⁰), Rawa (Ra'ua), and Ramadi (Al Ramadi).³⁶¹ The capital of Anbar is Ramadi.³⁶²

For 2022, the Iraqi Central Statistical Organization (CSO) estimated the governorate's population at 1 963 346.³⁶³

Anbar's population is predominately Sunni³⁶⁴ Arab³⁶⁵ and has historically had a strong tribal structure.³⁶⁶ For further information on Anbar governorate's ethnic and religious composition and economy, please refer to section 2.1 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Armed actors' presence and control

For information on the conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors in the governorate, including ISF, please refer to section 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 of the previous EUAA COI report, [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

In the reference period of this report, the United States continued to have a military presence at the Ain Al-Asad Airbase in Anbar.³⁶⁷

Shiite militia groups belonging to the umbrella group Popular Mobilization Forces/Popular Mobilization Units (PMF), such as the Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH)³⁶⁸ reportedly had headquarters³⁶⁹ or facilities in Al-Qaim (Al Kaim) city in Anbar governorate.³⁷⁰ The PMF factions in Al-Qaim (Al Kaim) included the 3rd Regiment of the 45th Brigade, which was commanded and manned by KH. Moreover, KH controlled the Al-Qaim (Al Kaim) border crossing at the Iraqi-Syrian border.³⁷¹

In its 2022 Country Report on Terrorism, the US Department of State (USDOS) stated that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) 'sought to reestablish footholds in Anbar'.³⁷² According to the UN Secretary-General, Anbar governorate was of logistical importance to

³⁶⁰ EPIC, ISHM: February 23 - March 2, 2023, 2 March 2023, [url](#)

³⁶¹ IOM Iraq, Return Dynamics in Anbar Governorate, June 2020, [url](#), p. 4; UNOCHA and iMMAP, Al-Anbar Governorate Reference Map 2020, 27 May 2020, [url](#)

³⁶² New York Times (The), After Years as a Battleground, Investment Boom Lifts Iraqi City, 10 July 2021; University of Anbar, About Al-Anbar Governorate, n.d., [url](#)

³⁶³ Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8

³⁶⁴ Al-Monitor, Anbar tribes key to security, political backing ahead of Iraq's October vote, 22 April 2022, [url](#); Chamoun, M., The Why and How of the Anbar Awakening: Its Rise and Fall, July 2020, [url](#), p. 39

³⁶⁵ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

³⁶⁶ Sanad, Tribes Announce the Renewal of Confidence in the Anbar Covenant, 19 December 2019, [url](#), p. 1

³⁶⁷ MEMO, US launches 'precise' strikes on sites in Iraq in response to attacks targeting its bases, 22 November 2023, [url](#); Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, [url](#), p. 7

³⁶⁸ Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes (KW48/2023), 27 November 2023, [url](#), p. 3; Al-Monitor, US strikes kill eight pro-Iran fighters in Iraq, angering Baghdad, 21 November 2023, [url](#)

³⁶⁹ CNN, What we know about the US strikes in Iraq and Syria, 3 February 2023, [url](#)

³⁷⁰ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 24, 2024, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 1

³⁷¹ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 24, 2024, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 7

³⁷² USDOS, Country Report on Terrorism 2022 – Chapter 1 – Iraq, 30 November 2023, [url](#), p. 128

ISIL.³⁷³ In the first half of 2023, some senior ISIL leaders were relocated to the Syrian-Iraqi border region of the governorate, where the group increased its activities.³⁷⁴ In a January 2024 report, the UN Security Council stated that ISIL was present in the western border region of Anbar governorate with around 160 to 200 fighters. The group reportedly had cells in remote western areas, including in the Wadi Hawran area, and its attacks continued, including in the city Al-Rutba. Temporary checkpoints were established by the group ‘to make its presence felt’ and to target military facilities.³⁷⁵ The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and the Critical Threats Project (CTP) reported that the existence of a large ISIL camp in Wadi Hawran in February 2023 indicated ‘a sizeable ISIS [ISIL] presence’ in the Anbar deserts.³⁷⁶

Recent security trends

There was reportedly an increase in attacks on US forces in Iraq since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas conflict in early October 2023.³⁷⁷ However, as of February 2024, attacks of Iran-affiliated groups in Iraq reportedly appeared to have ceased.³⁷⁸ In the reference period the Ain Al-Asad military base in the north-east of central³⁷⁹ Anbar governorate³⁸⁰ was repeatedly targeted by groups belonging to the so-called Islamic Resistance in Iraq^{381, 382} Iran-linked groups belonging to the Islamic Resistance³⁸³ targeted the site with drones³⁸⁴ and rockets.³⁸⁵

³⁷³ UNSG, Sixteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/76, 1 February 2023, [url](#), para. 29

³⁷⁴ UN Security Council, Letter dated 24 July 2023 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2023/549, 25 July 2023, [url](#), para. 48

³⁷⁵ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 50

³⁷⁶ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, May 24, 2023, 26 May 2023, [url](#)

³⁷⁷ Reuters, Drones target Iraq’s Ain al-Asad airbase, no casualties, damage – sources, 31 October 2023, [url](#)

³⁷⁸ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#)

³⁷⁹ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 19

³⁸⁰ Reuters, Rockets, drones hit Iraqi bases housing U.S. forces, 20 October 2023, [url](#)

³⁸¹ The so-called Islamic Resistance emerged as an umbrella term in October 2023 in the context of the Israel-Hamas conflict, with the aim of demonstrating unity among Iran-affiliated armed groups; TWI, Profile: The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, last updated 30 October 2023, [url](#)

³⁸² Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, [url](#), p. 7; ISW and CTP, Iran Update, December 11, 2023, 11 December 2023, [url](#), p. 14; ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 27, 2024, 27 January 2024, [url](#), p. 9; Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes (KW04/2024), 22 January 2024, [url](#), p. 6; Washington Post (The), Iranian-linked militants strike Iraqi base housing U.S. troops, 21 January 2024, [url](#)

³⁸³ France 24, US says Islamic Resistance in Iraq group carried out attack on base in Jordan, 31 January 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: November 30 – December 7, 2023, 7 December 2023, [url](#)

³⁸⁴ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 27, 2024, 27 January 2024, [url](#), p. 9

³⁸⁵ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#); Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, [url](#), p. 7; Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes (KW04/2024), 22 January 2024, [url](#), p. 6

On the other hand, the US carried out airstrikes in Anbar governorate, such as in Al-Qaim³⁸⁶ (Al Kaim) and Al-Rutba districts.³⁸⁷ Largely Shiite militia groups,³⁸⁸ including the Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH)³⁸⁹ and other PMF groups, were targeted in the reference period by US airstrikes.³⁹⁰

ISIL continued to carry out attacks in a number of Iraqi governorates,³⁹¹ including Anbar,³⁹² for example, in and around Al-Rutba city, Al-Nukhayb and the Arar Border area in Al-Rutba district.³⁹³ The USDOD reported increased activity in Anbar governorate between October and December 2023.³⁹⁴ Sources reported several instances of kidnappings and killings of shepherds by ISIL in the reference period.³⁹⁵ It was further reported that the group sporadically targeted barracks and checkpoints of ISF, including in Anbar governorate,³⁹⁶ and also targeted Tribal Mobilization Forces (TMF).³⁹⁷

Meanwhile, a number of operations targeting ISIL were carried out by the ISF,³⁹⁸ for example, near Akashat city in Al-Rutba district and Heet district.³⁹⁹ TMF were also involved in targeting ISIL,⁴⁰⁰ such as in an operation in the Jazira region in the government's northeast, in which a senior ISIL fighter from the region was reportedly killed.⁴⁰¹

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 - 31 March 2024), there were 110 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Anbar governorate, of which 53 were coded as battles, 46 explosions/remote violence, and 11 incidents of violence against civilians.⁴⁰² Security incidents

³⁸⁶ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 24, 2024, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 7; Al-Monitor, Iraq slams latest US airstrikes on Kataib Hezbollah sites, 24 January 2024, [url](#); CNN, What we know about the US strikes in Iraq and Syria, 3 February 2023, [url](#)

³⁸⁷ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#); Iraqi News, Iraq declares three days of mourning following US strikes in Anbar, 3 February 2024, [url](#)

³⁸⁸ Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes (KW06/2024), 5 February 2024, [url](#), p. 3; Iraqi News, Iraq declares three days of mourning following US strikes in Anbar, 3 February 2024, [url](#)

³⁸⁹ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 24, 2024, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 7; Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; Al-Monitor, Iraq slams latest US airstrikes on Kataib Hezbollah sites, 24 January 2024, [url](#); Al-Monitor, US strikes kill eight pro-Iran fighters in Iraq, angering Baghdad, 21 November 2023, [url](#)

³⁹⁰ CNN, What we know about the US strikes in Iraq and Syria, 3 February 2023, [url](#)

³⁹¹ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 24

³⁹² UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 24; ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update [figure 1], July 5, 2023, 7 July 2023, [url](#)

³⁹³ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update [figure 1], July 5, 2023, 7 July 2023, [url](#)

³⁹⁴ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 16

³⁹⁵ Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, داعش ينتقل لختف رعاة الأغنام قرب المدن المحررة في العراق [ISIL resorts to kidnapping shepherds close to liberated cities in Iraq], 16 September 2023, [url](#); Al-Maalomah, استشهاد اثنين من رعاة الاغنام بهجوم إرهابي في صحراء الانبار [Two shepherds killed in terrorist attack in Anbar desert], 11 September 2023, [url](#)

³⁹⁶ AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

³⁹⁷ EPIC, ISHM: February 23 - March 2, 2023, 2 March 2023, [url](#)

³⁹⁸ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#); Rudaw, Iraqi forces arrest 7 ISIS suspects, 2 January 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: September 14 – 21, 2023, 21 September 2023, [url](#); ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, May 24, 2023, 26 May 2023, [url](#)

³⁹⁹ EPIC, ISHM: February 23 - March 2, 2023, 2 March 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁰ EPIC, ISHM: January 11 – 18, 2024, 18 January 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: September 21 – 28, 2023, 28 September 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁰¹ EPIC, ISHM: January 11 – 18, 2024, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁰² EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

were recorded in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in Heet district (see Figure 12). According to ACLED data, Islamic Resistance in Iraq and the Global Coalition against Daesh were involved in the majority of incidents (coded as either ‘Actor1’ or ‘Actor2’), followed by the ISF and associated actors against ISIL.

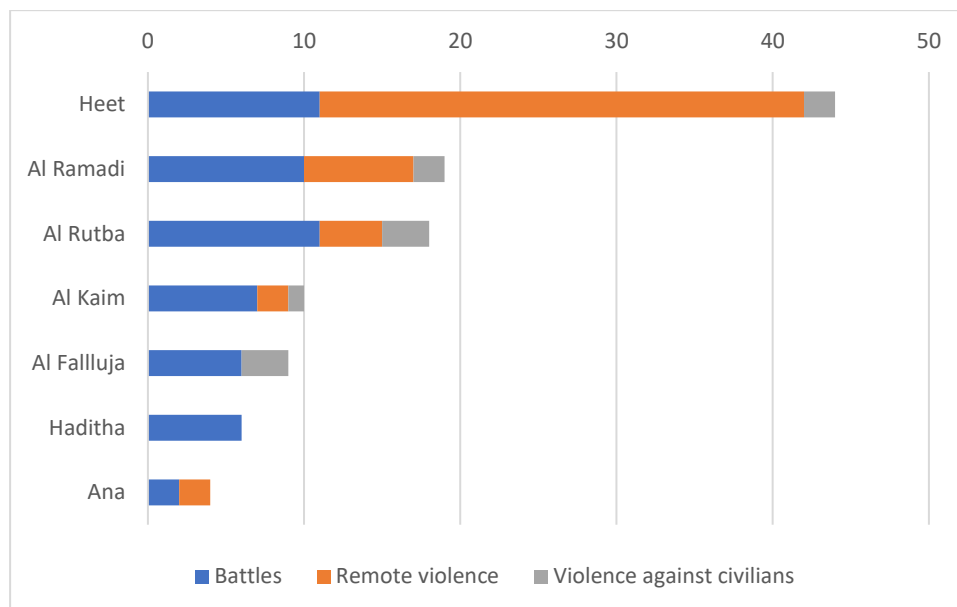


Figure 12. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Anbar governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.⁴⁰³

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 12 events leading to fatalities in Anbar governorate.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰³ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

⁴⁰⁴ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

Civilian casualties

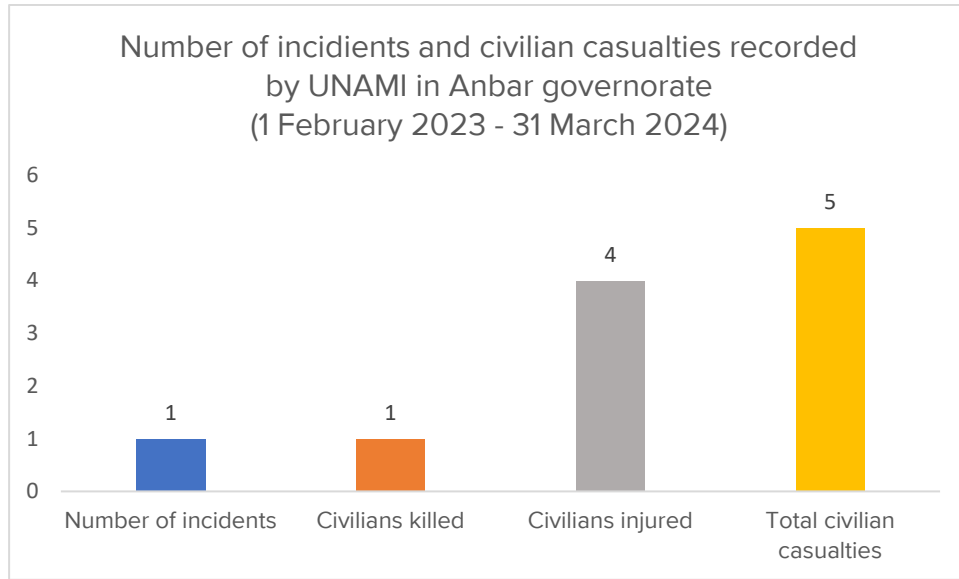


Figure 13. Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI in Anbar governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.⁴⁰⁵

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 5 civilian casualties in Anbar governorate.⁴⁰⁶ For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 2 civilian deaths in the governorate.⁴⁰⁷

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

For older information on conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war in Anbar governorate, please refer to section 2.1.6 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

In the reference period, attacks on transmission towers between Anbar and Salah Al-Din governorates carried out by ISIL and other unspecified insurgent groups were reported.⁴⁰⁸

As of the end of 2022, around 10 974 800 square metres of Anbar governorate's area were reported to be cluster-munition contaminated.⁴⁰⁹

Further relevant information could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

⁴⁰⁵ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

⁴⁰⁶ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

⁴⁰⁷ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

⁴⁰⁸ Shafaq News, "حرب الأبراج" تستعر.. القوات العراقية تطلق خطة "تمدد وتوسع" لمواجهة، [War of the towers raging: Iraqi forces launch plan to prolong and expand fight], 7 August 2023, [url](#); Al-Maalomah, الحشد الشعبي يتخذ إجراءات، [Anbar: PMU strengthens security measures for the protection of transmission towers], 3 August 2023, [url](#); Al-Maalomah, الانبار.. احباط محاولة تفجير برج كهرباء في الانبار، [Attempt to blow up a transmission tower in Anbar thwarted], 10 January 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁹ Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 61



Conflict-induced displacement and return

No information could be found on new conflict-induced displacements occurring in Anbar during the reference period. IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)⁴¹⁰ statistics as of December 2023 estimate the number of IDPs originating from Anbar to be 126 303.⁴¹¹ As of December 2023, 1 548 936 individuals had returned to the governorate⁴¹² since IOM started recording returns in April 2015.⁴¹³ The districts of Ramadi (Al Ramadi) and Falluja (Al Falluja) make up the highest numbers of the returnee population.⁴¹⁴ No information could be found on new returns occurring in Anbar during the reference period. In March 2023, Amnesty International (AI) reported that IDPs faced obstacles returning to their places of origin in Anbar. AI elaborated that this was due to 'risks of arbitrary arrest and other harassment by armed actors and security forces, as well as a lack of livelihood opportunities and access to services'.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁰ Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁴¹¹ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

⁴¹² IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

⁴¹³ IOM Iraq, DTM – Methodology, n.d., [url](#)

⁴¹⁴ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

⁴¹⁵ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, April 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023, 3 August 2023, [url](#), p. 38



2.2. Babil



Map 3: Babil governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.⁴¹⁶

General description of governorate

Babil governorate is located in the central part of Iraq, to the south of Baghdad governorate, and has borders with Baghdad, Anbar, Kerbala, Najaf, Qadissiya, and Wassit governorates. The governorate is divided into the following districts: Al-Musayab (Al Mussyab), Al-Mahaweel, Al-Hilla, and Al-Hashimiya. The governorate's capital is Hilla.⁴¹⁷

For 2022, the Iraqi Central Statistical Organization (CSO) estimated the governorate's population at 2 288 456.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁶ UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, [url](#)

⁴¹⁷ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Babil Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

⁴¹⁸ Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8



The majority of the governorate's population is Shia Arab⁴¹⁹ and there is a Sunni minority.⁴²⁰ For further information on Babil governorate's ethno-religious composition and economy, please refer to section 2.2 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Armed actors' presence and control

For information on the conflict background and on areas of control of armed actors in the governorate, including ISF, please refer to section 2.1.2 and 2.2.3 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

In the reference period, PMF, including KH, continued to have a presence in Babil governorate,⁴²¹ such as in Jurf Al-Nasr/Jurf Al-Sakhr,⁴²² which was controlled by KH.⁴²³ Sources indicated that the PMF had headquarters in Babil governorate⁴²⁴ in the Al-Jaza'ir area of Hilla city.⁴²⁵ The PMF factions in the governorate included the 46th and 47th brigades, which were reportedly commanded and manned by KH.⁴²⁶

In May 2023, ISW and CTP reported that ISIL and its predecessor Al-Qaeda had, in Iraq, 'historic support zones' in the northern Babil governorate. According to the source, there were indications that ISIL lacked operational security as well as safe areas for mounting operations, and there were no indications for any ISIL efforts 'to create support zones'.⁴²⁷

Recent security trends

In the reference period, the US launched airstrikes on positions of Iranian-affiliated militia groups such as KH (part of PMF) in parts of Babil governorate⁴²⁸ such as in Jurf Al-Nasr/Jurf Al-Sakhr,⁴²⁹ and Hilla (Al Hilla).⁴³⁰

⁴¹⁹ AP, Shattered by war, Sunni Arabs despair over future in Iraq, 10 September 2017, [url](#)

⁴²⁰ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#); AP, Shattered by war, Sunni Arabs despair over future in Iraq, 10 September 2017, [url](#); USDOS, 2019 Country Reports on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 10 June 2020, [url](#), p. 9

⁴²¹ Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9

⁴²² ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 24, 2024, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 7; NINA, استشهاد احد عناصر الحشد الشعبي شمال الحلة [A member of the Popular Mobilization Forces killed in north of Hilla], 13 July 2023, [url](#)

⁴²³ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 24, 2024, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 7

⁴²⁴ NINA, رئيس المجلس الاعلى الاسلامي العراقي يدين الاعتداء الامريكي ضد مقرات الحشد الشعبي [Head of Iraqi Islamic Supreme Council condemns US attack on headquarters of the PMU], 26 December 2023, [url](#)

⁴²⁵ Shafaq News, 20 جريحاً بقصف أمريكي على مقرات الحشد وسط بابل رداً على استهداف اربيل (فيديو) [About 20 injured in US airstrike on PMF headquarters in central Babil in reply to Erbil targeting (video)], 26 December 2023, [url](#)

⁴²⁶ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 24, 2024, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 7

⁴²⁷ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, May 24, 2023, 26 May 2023, [url](#)

⁴²⁸ Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 24, 2024, 24 January 2024, [url](#), p. 7; ISW and CTP, Iran Update, February 5, 2024, 5 February 2024, [url](#), p. 11; NINA, رئيس المجلس الاعلى الاسلامي العراقي يدين الاعتداء الامريكي ضد مقرات الحشد الشعبي [Head of Iraqi Islamic Supreme Council condemns US attack on headquarters of the PMU], 26 December 2023, [url](#)

⁴²⁹ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 25, 30; Shafaq News, قصف جوي يستهدف قاعدة تابعة للحشد الشعبي شمالي بابل [Airstrike targeted PMU military base in northern Babil], 23 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴³⁰ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, December 26, 2023, 26 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1, 7



According to a September 2023 report of the UN Secretary-General, sporadic attacks on convoys of 'Iraqi companies contracted to carry supplies for the international counter-Da'esh [ISIL] coalition' continued in a number of governorates, including Babil, in the first half of 2023, causing no casualties. The attacks, which were carried out by Ashab Al-Kahf, the International Resistance, and the group Revenge for Muhandis,⁴³¹ resumed in the first quarter of 2023 for the first time since August 2022.⁴³²

In May 2023, ISW and CTP reported that Iranian-affiliated militias and ISF frequently disrupted ISIL attacks in northern Babil governorate.⁴³³

The National Iraqi News Agency (NINA) reported sporadic cases of tribal conflict in Babil governorate, which resulted in injuries.⁴³⁴

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024), there were 24 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Babil governorate, of which 9 were coded as battles, 9 explosions/remote violence, and 6 incidents of violence against civilians.⁴³⁵ Security incidents were recorded in all governorate districts (see Figure 14). According to ACLED data, unidentified armed actors were involved in the majority of incidents (coded as either 'Actor1' or 'Actor2'), particularly where civilians were also an actor.

⁴³¹ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 25; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 17

⁴³² UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 17

⁴³³ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, May 24, 2023, 26 May 2023, [url](#)

⁴³⁴ NINA, اصابة ثلاثة اشخاص بنزاع عشائري جنوب الحلة [Three people injured in tribal conflict south of Hilla], 1 December 2023, [url](#); NINA, اصابة ستة اشخاص بنزاع عشائري شمال الحلة [Six people injured in tribal conflict north of Hilla], 5 November 2023, [url](#); NINA, اصابة ثلاثة اشخاص بنزاع عشائري في بابل [Three people injured in tribal conflict in Babil], 20 October 2023, [url](#)

⁴³⁵ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

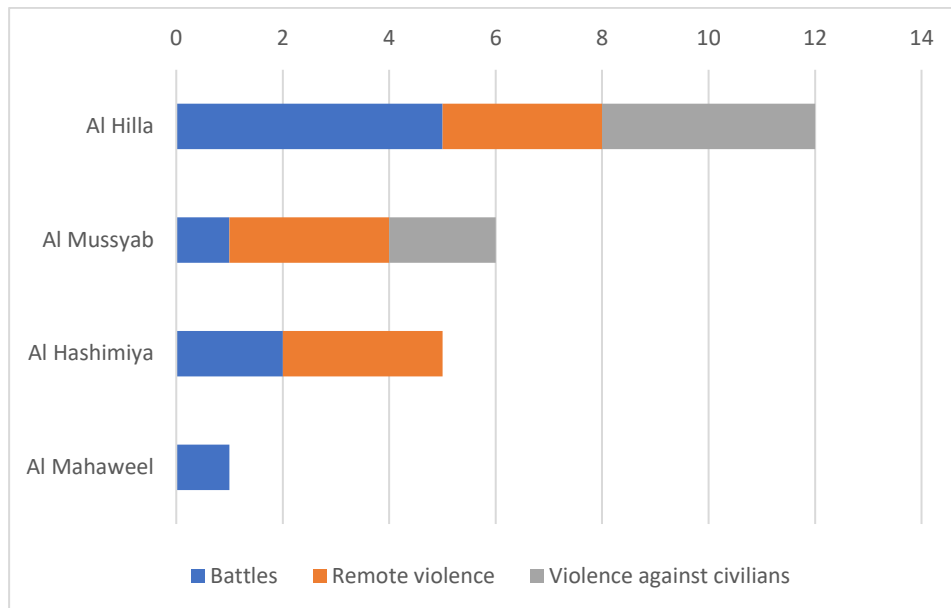


Figure 14. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Babil governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data⁴³⁶

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded two events leading to fatalities in Babil governorate.⁴³⁷

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI did not record any civilian casualties in Babil governorate.⁴³⁸ For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Babil governorate.⁴³⁹

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

No information on conflict-related infrastructure damage in the reference period could be found within the time constraints of this report.

As of the end of 2022, around 633 031 square metres of Babil governorate's area were reported to be cluster-munition contaminated.⁴⁴⁰ The NINA reported the death of one man by a landmine explosion north of Hilla city in August 2023.⁴⁴¹ Further relevant information on explosive remnants of war could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

⁴³⁶ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

⁴³⁷ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

⁴³⁸ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

⁴³⁹ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

⁴⁴⁰ Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 61

⁴⁴¹ NINA, وفاة شخص نتيجة انفجار لغم ارضي شمال الحلة [Death of Individual by landmine explosion north of Hilla], 3 August 2023, [url](#)

Conflict-induced displacement and return

No information could be found on new conflict-induced displacements occurring in Babil during the reference period. IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)⁴⁴² statistics as of December 2023 estimate the number of IDPs originating from Babil to be 44 099.⁴⁴³

As of December 2023, 1 860 individuals had returned to their places of origin in Babil since IOM started recording returns in April 2015.⁴⁴⁴ The district of Al-Musayab (Al Mussyab) constitutes the only district with a returnee population.⁴⁴⁵ No information could be found on new returns occurring in Babil during the reference period.

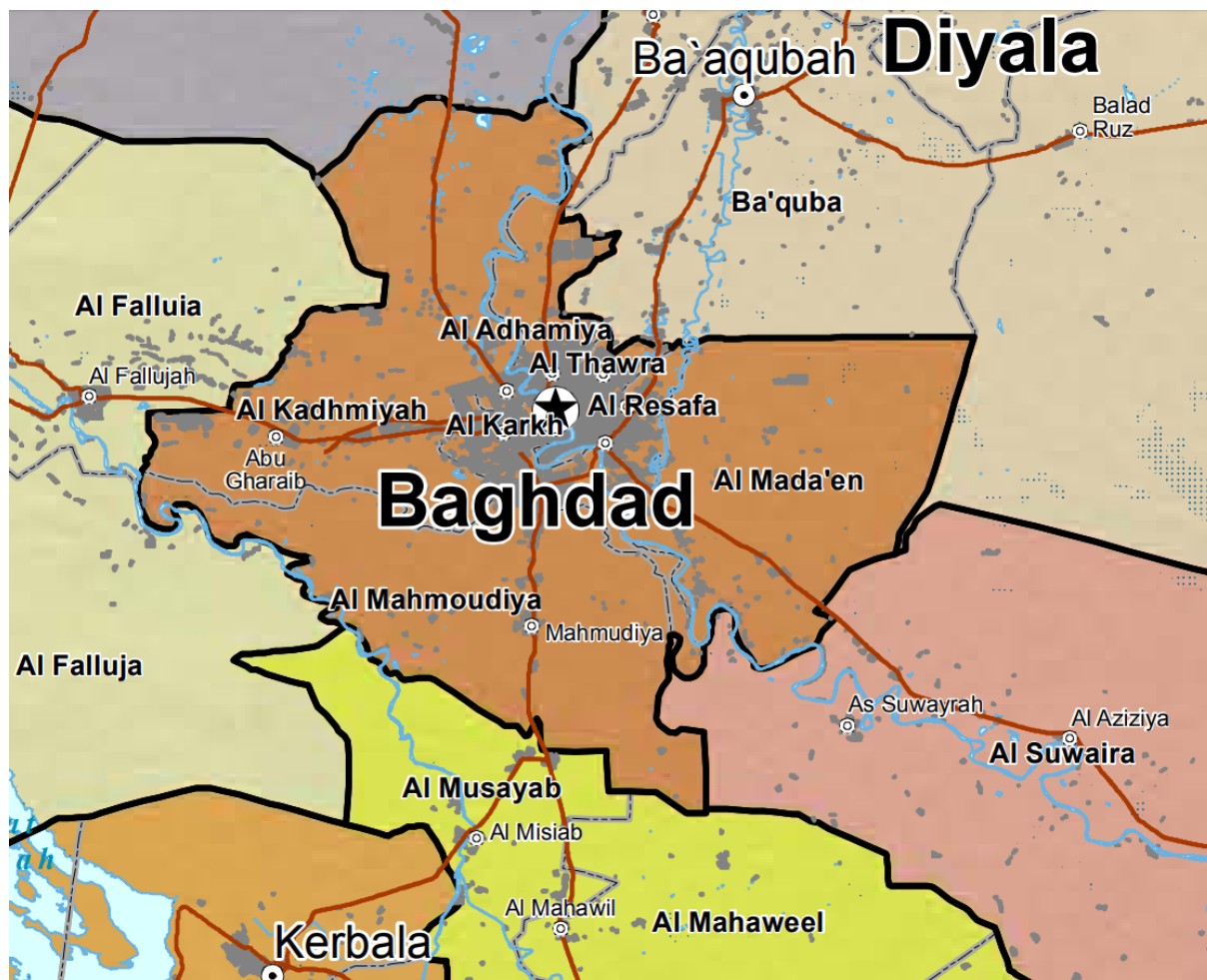
⁴⁴² Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁴⁴³ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁴ IOM Iraq, DTM – Methodology, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁴⁵ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

2.3. Baghdad



Map 4: Baghdad governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads,
© United Nations.⁴⁴⁶

General description of governorate

Baghdad governorate is situated in the Tigris plain in the centre of Iraq and is the smallest of all governorates in terms of surface area (4 555 square kilometres). It is the location of Baghdad City, the capital of Iraq and the country's largest city. Baghdad City is a major economic hub.⁴⁴⁷ The governorate is divided into a total of 14 districts. Baghdad City is made up of Adhamiya, Karkh, Karrada, Khadhimiya, Mansour, Sadr City (Thawra 1 and 2⁴⁴⁸), Al-Rashid, Rusafa and 9 Nissan ('new Baghdad') districts, while the rest of Baghdad governorate comprises districts of Al-Mada'in, Taji, Tarmiya, Mahmudiya, and Abu Ghraib.⁴⁴⁹ As of 2022, Baghdad City records an estimated population of 8.75 million,⁴⁵⁰ the highest population

⁴⁴⁶ UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁷ NCCI, Baghdad Governorate Profile, updated December 2015, [url](#), pp. 1-2; Bahry L. & Marr P., A.. Baghdad, Encyclopedia Britannica, 10 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁸ IAU, Baghdad Governorate Profile, November 2010, [url](#), p. 1

⁴⁴⁹ NCCI, Baghdad Governorate Profile, updated December 2015, [url](#), pp. 1-2

⁴⁵⁰ Shafaq News, Baghdad: A Metropolis city struggles with population surges and traffic woes, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

density rate in the country. Baghdad governorate's population in 2022 was estimated to be 9 006 001,⁴⁵¹ representing the most populous governorate in the country.⁴⁵²

Detailed information on the general description of governorate and ethno-religious composition is available in the [EUAA COI report Iraq – Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Armed actors' presence and control

For information on the conflict background, please refer to section 2.3.2 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

The Baghdad Operations Command (BOC) is headquartered in Baghdad.⁴⁵³ The BOC was established in 2006 as part of Operation Enforcing the Law.⁴⁵⁴ Its commander is reportedly a member of Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq⁴⁵⁵ and was allegedly found responsible of the killing of Al-Sadr's supporters during clashes occurred in Baghdad between Sadrists and Iran-backed groups in August 2022.⁴⁵⁶ During the reference period, the ISF conducted anti-ISIL in several areas, including Baghdad.⁴⁵⁷

ISIL

Despite its territorial defeat, ISIL was still operational in Baghdad governorate.⁴⁵⁸ In the reporting period, it continued to maintain a presence in its strongholds in the north of Baghdad,⁴⁵⁹ namely in Tarmiya district,⁴⁶⁰ conducting asymmetric attacks against ISF⁴⁶¹ consisting in IEDs, small-arms ambushes or assassinations⁴⁶². Attacks were conducted mostly through light weapons and explosive devices targeting government, security officials, community leaders, civilian and military facilities.⁴⁶³ In response, ISF continued to conduct

⁴⁵¹ Iraq, CSO, *المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني* [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8

⁴⁵² Shafaq News, Ministry of Planning reveals Iraq's population estimates for 2023, 6 December 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵³ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 19

⁴⁵⁴ Sirri, O., When the Lights Go Out: Iraq in Revolution, Society and Space, 10 February 2020, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁵ ISW, The Leadership and Purpose of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces, 19 March 2024, [url](#); Knights M. et. al, How Tehran-Backed Terrorist Organizations and Militias Captured the Iraqi State in: CTC (Combating Terrorism Center) Sentinel, Vol. 16, Issue 11, December 2023, [url](#), p. 11

⁴⁵⁶ ISW, The Leadership and Purpose of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces, 19 March 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁷ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: February 29 – March 7, 2024, 7 March 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁸ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2022 - Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 20, 21

⁴⁵⁹ AP News, A French soldier is killed in clashes with extremists in Iraq, 29 August 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁰ UNSG, Report of the Secretary General, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, 31 July 2023, [url](#), para 32, p. 7; EPIC, ISHM: January 4 – 11, 2024, 11 January 2024, [url](#); Shafaq, Security forces kill two "terrorists" in violent clashes north of Baghdad, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁶¹ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), Report of the Secretary-General, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para 24; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), Report of the Secretary-General, 25 January 2024, para 19, [url](#)

⁴⁶² USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve, Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress, January 1, 2023–March 31, 2023, [url](#), p. 10

⁴⁶³ UNSG, Eighteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, 31 January 2024, [url](#), para 35



counter-terrorism operations.⁴⁶⁴ According to Musings on Iraq, Tarmiya has become one of the most violent areas in Iraq⁴⁶⁵ and the main target for ISIL operations for unknown reasons.⁴⁶⁶ It is noted that ISIL was likely supporting its cell in Tarmiya and in northern Baghdad Belts through ground lines of communication originating from the north through land held by Iran-backed PMF forces. ISF is reportedly unsuccessful in contrasting its presence from the northern Baghdad Belts. In February 2023, Critical Threats Project (CTP) and Institute for the Study of War (ISW) argued that ISIL will continue to attack ISF forces in the northern Belts unless a major counter-ISIL operation is launched.⁴⁶⁷

Lead Inspector General's quarterly report covering the period between 1 October and 31 December 2023 stated that the rise in the Iranian-backed Iraqi militia attacks against US forces and the US retaliatory strikes had a negative effect on the ability of the Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) to support ISF and KSF, as militia-led attacks diverted CJTF-OIR's resources and focus from its advisory mission.⁴⁶⁸

US-led coalition forces

As of January 2024, 2 500 US forces are still deployed in Iraq as part of the US-led coalition set up to fight ISIL.⁴⁶⁹ Reportedly, advisors and contractors working with the US-led international military coalition are hosted by Iraqi government-administered military bases and at the US Embassy in Baghdad,⁴⁷⁰ which continues to be the largest US Embassy in the world.⁴⁷¹

As of December 2023, the US-led Coalition's Military Advisory Group continued to provide advisory support and assistance to ISF, including the Iraqi Air Enterprise, in Baghdad and Erbil.⁴⁷² As the attacks between Iran-backed militias and US forces escalated following the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas armed conflict on 7 October 2023, the Iraqi government called to put an end to the presence of the US-led international military coalition in Iraq.⁴⁷³ Iran-backed attacks on US targets took place also in Baghdad, targeting US military bases⁴⁷⁴ and the US Embassy in Baghdad.⁴⁷⁵ Starting from 20 October 2023, the US reduced its employees

⁴⁶⁴ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), Report of the Secretary-General, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para 24; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), Report of the Secretary-General, 25 January 2024, para 19, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁵ Musings on Iraq, No Ramadan Offensive By The Islamic State Yet, 3 April 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁶ Musings on Iraq, Violence Drops In Iraq For The 2nd Month, 5 March 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁷ Critical Threats/ISW, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, February 22, 2023, 22 February 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁴⁶⁸ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government activities related to Iraq & Syria, Lead Inspector General Report to The United States Congress, October 1, 2023–December 31, 2023, [url](#), p. 18

⁴⁶⁹ Al Jazeera, US, Iraq begin formal talks on winding down US-led military coalition, 25 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁰ ACLED, The Muqawama and Its Enemies Shifting Patterns in Iran-Backed Shiite Militia Activity in Iraq, 23 May 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁷¹ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government activities related to Iraq & Syria, Lead Inspector General Report to The United States Congress, October 1, 2023–December 31, 2023, [url](#), p. 51

⁴⁷² USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 18

⁴⁷³ Reuters, Exclusive: Iraq seeks quick exit of US forces but no deadline set, PM says, 10 January 2024, [url](#);

VOA, Iran Backs Iraqi Call to End Presence of US-Led Force, 8 January 2024, [url](#); Rudaw, Iraq

threatens to 'terminate' anti-ISIS coalition mission following US strike, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁴ Guardian (The), US troops attacked in Iraq and Syria as west warns of 'spillover' from Israel conflict, 20 October 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁵ VOA News, New Drone Attack Against US Troops in Iraq, 25 December 2023, [url](#)





from the Embassy in Baghdad due to ‘increased security threats against the U.S. government personnel and interests’.⁴⁷⁶

More information on US-led coalition presence in Baghdad governorate can be found in: [EUAA COI report Iraq – Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF)

Since Al-Sudani’s appointment in October 2022, IRGC-linked PMF factions, the so-called *muqawama* or ‘resistance’ factions,⁴⁷⁷ were reportedly becoming more visible in Baghdad.⁴⁷⁸ Iran-backed militias operating within the PMF umbrella, namely Kata’ib Hezbollah (KH),⁴⁷⁹ Asa’ib Ahl Al-Haq,⁴⁸⁰ and Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba,⁴⁸¹ maintained a presence through offices and barracks in the Green Zone.⁴⁸² KH was consolidating its control over territory in the capital through the checkpoints in central Baghdad and, starting May 2023, in Albu Aitha area of Baghdad.⁴⁸³

Reportedly, since October 2022, Iran-backed militia seized control of security agencies such as the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS) and the Counter-Terrorism Command (CTC).⁴⁸⁴ A research conducted by Militia Spotlight⁴⁸⁵ and published in December 2023 showed that 2 400 out of 2 900 new recruits in 2023 in CTC were nominated by the Coordination Framework, including US-designated foreign terrorist organisations such as Kata’ib Hezbollah and Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq.⁴⁸⁶ Key roles within the National Security Services (NSS), such as the director of operations and the head of Baghdad security operations, are reportedly occupied by members of Asa’ib Ahl Al-Haq (AAH) militia.⁴⁸⁷ Iran-backed militia were also occupying key roles in Baghdad International Airport, allowing the government to know who is entering and leaving the country, also through the KRI.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁷⁶ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government activities related to Iraq & Syria, Lead Inspector General Report to The United States Congress, October 1, 2023–December 31, 2023, [url](#), p. 51

⁴⁷⁷ Malik H., Knights M., Profile: The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, TWI, 21 October 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁸ Al Kaabi A., Knights M., Kataib Hezbollah’s Escalating Feud with the Iraqi Security Forces, TWI, 19 March 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁹ Knights M. et al., Profile: Kataib Hezbollah, TWI, 21 October 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁰ Knights M., Profile: Asa’ib Ahl Al-Haq, TWI, 27 April 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁸¹ Knights M., Profile: Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, TWI, 27 April 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁸² Knights M., Removing All Militias From Baghdad’s International Zone, TWI, 31 August 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸³ Knights M. et. al, How Tehran-Backed Terrorist Organizations and Militias Captured the Iraqi State in: CTC (Combating Terrorism Center) Sentinel, Vol. 16, Issue 11, December 2023, [url](#), p. 11; Al Kaabi A., Knights M., Kataib Hezbollah’s Escalating Feud with the Iraqi Security Forces, TWI, 19 March 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁴ Knights M. et. al, How Tehran-Backed Terrorist Organizations and Militias Captured the Iraqi State in: CTC (Combating Terrorism Center) Sentinel, Vol. 16, Issue 11, December 2023, [url](#), pp. 10, 20

⁴⁸⁵ Militia Spotlight is a search policy analysis created by Washington Institute for Near East Policy which monitors activities of Iran-backed militia in Iraq and Syria, [url](#), n.d.

⁴⁸⁶ Knights M. et. al, How Tehran-Backed Terrorist Organizations and Militias Captured the Iraqi State in: CTC (Combating Terrorism Center) Sentinel, Vol. 16, Issue 11, December 2023, [url](#), pp. 10, 20

⁴⁸⁷ Knights M. et. al, Iraq’s New Regime Change: How Tehran-Backed Terrorist Organizations and Militias Captured the Iraqi State in: CTC (Combating Terrorism Center) Sentinel, Vol. 16, Issue 11, December 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁸ Knights M. et. al, How Tehran-Backed Terrorist Organizations and Militias Captured the Iraqi State in: CTC (Combating Terrorism Center) Sentinel, Vol. 16, Issue 11, December 2023, [url](#), p. 11





Iran-backed militias were also consolidating their economic power in Baghdad, taking over from the Iraqi Army and Federal Police,⁴⁸⁹ through the Muhandis General Company, a PMF-owned commercial entity established in November 2022.⁴⁹⁰ Kata'ib Hezbollah and Asaib Ahl al-Haq were reportedly growing illicit property empires.⁴⁹¹ Al Sadr's Saraya al-Salam militia had a strong presence in Baghdad and its relations with PMF were reportedly hostile due to competition over legal and illegal economic power.⁴⁹²

For more information on PMF presence in Baghdad governorate, please see [EUAA COI report Iraq – Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Recent security trends

During the reference period, the security situation in Baghdad has been characterised by clashes involving federal forces, PMF and ISIL, along with internal PMF disputes.⁴⁹³ Since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas armed conflict in early October 2023, the surge in attacks on US forces and US-retaliatory operations have directly affected Baghdad.⁴⁹⁴ As of December 2023, USDOD noted that political violence and civil unrest were 'frequent' in the capital, due to 'economic conditions, political turmoil, lack of basic services, and regional events inflaming tensions'.⁴⁹⁵ It is said that due to heightened security measures, International Zone Area of Central Baghdad and Baghdad International Airport are areas relatively more stable if compared to the rest of the city.⁴⁹⁶

US-Iran escalating tensions

According to data provided by ACLED in an article published in May 2023, between June 2019 and March 2023, Iran-backed militia conducted over 500 attacks, using drones, IEDs, and rockets. The main targets of the attacks were convoys carrying materiel for US personnel and allied forces affiliated with the Global Coalition Against Daesh, Turkish bases located in northern Iraq and alleged 'un-Islamic' activities, which were mainly located around Baghdad. In

⁴⁸⁹ Al Kaabi A., Knights M., Kataib Hezbollah's Escalating Feud with the Iraqi Security Forces, TWI, 19 March 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁰ CFRI, The Muhandis Company: Towards the Economic Autonomy of the Hashd al-Shaabi, 16 February 2024, [url](#); Knights M. et al., Profile: The Muhandis General Company, TWI, 17 May 2023, [url](#); Al Kaabi A., Knights M., Kataib Hezbollah's Escalating Feud with the Iraqi Security Forces, TWI, 19 March 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁹¹ Knights M., al Kaabi A., Coordination Framework Militias Exposed for Stealing Baghdad Real Estate, TWI, 31 August 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁹² Hudson, Post-Election Iraq and Intra-Shiite War, 26 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹³ France, OFPRA, Irak : Veille sécuritaire du 1er juillet 2022 au 30 juin 2023 [Iraq: Security monitoring, 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023], 20 September 2023, [url](#), pp. 11-12; Shafaq News, Iraqi Security at Risk: the conflict between Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq and Saraya Al-Salam, 22 February 2024, [url](#); CFRI, Iraq shaken by attacks and political unrest: what can we expect?, 27 December 2023, [url](#); Knights M., Profile: Asaib Ahl al-Haq, TWI, 27 April 2021, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq, December 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁴ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 51; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), Report of the Secretary-General, 25 January 2024, para 28-29, [url](#); AP News, Airstrike in central Baghdad kills Iran-backed militia leader as regional tensions escalate, 4 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁵ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 52

⁴⁹⁶ Crisis24, Iraq Country Report, Security, 21 November 2023, [url](#)



the south of Baghdad, attacks on US convoys transporting material from and to military bases have been more frequent as convoy routes are more concentrated in the area.⁴⁹⁷

Iran-backed militias stepped up in drone, IEDs and rocket attacks targeting US military facilities in Syria and Iraq since 17 October 2023,⁴⁹⁸ as a response to US support of Israel in the Israel-Hamas armed conflict.⁴⁹⁹ The attacks, which were also recorded in Baghdad,⁵⁰⁰ reportedly caused minor injuries among US personnel.⁵⁰¹ Iran-backed militia's attacks prompted US response, resulting in what experts describe as 'a tit-for-tat' exchange of fire between the US and Iran on Iraq's soil.⁵⁰² Some observers maintained that the rise in hostilities dates back to April 2023, following a rise in drone attacks on US targets in Syria.⁵⁰³ As a result, in the same month, several protests occurred in Baghdad against the US, with the direct involvement of Al Sadr's supporters.⁵⁰⁴

As a response to the Iran-backed attacks, in November 2023, the US conducted airstrikes targeting Iran-backed militias military assets in Syria⁵⁰⁵ and in the south of Baghdad, killing eight group members.⁵⁰⁶ The US air raids prompted the strong condemnation from the Iraqi government, which considered such attacks as an 'unacceptable violation of Iraqi sovereignty'⁵⁰⁷ as it targeted state security forces.⁵⁰⁸

On 8 December 2023, the US Embassy in Iraq, the Iraq National Security Service and a residential building were struck by 'at least' seven mortars.⁵⁰⁹ No group claimed responsibility for the attack,⁵¹⁰ although the US Embassy spokesperson expressed its suspicion over the Iran-backed group's involvement. No civilian casualties were recorded as a result of the rocket attack.⁵¹¹ On 4 January 2024, an US airstrike in Baghdad killed a senior commander of an Iran-

⁴⁹⁷ ACLED, The Muqawama and Its Enemies Shifting Patterns in Iran-Backed Shiite Militia Activity in Iraq, 23 May 2023, [url](#). Source did not provide additional information on the definition of 'un-islamic activities'.

⁴⁹⁸ Al Kaabi et al., Facade Group Linked to Iran Claims Five Attacks on Americans in Iraq and Syria, TWI, [url](#); Guardian (The), US troops attacked in Iraq and Syria as west warns of 'spillover' from Israel conflict, 20 October 2023, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq, October 2023, [url](#);

International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Iraq, November 2023, [url](#); USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government activities related to Iraq & Syria, Lead Inspector General Report to The United States Congress, October 1, 2023–December 31, 2023, [url](#), p. 51

⁴⁹⁹ Al Jazeera, Iraq slams US strikes that killed eight pro-Iran fighters, 22 November 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁰ National News (The), Rockets fired towards Iraq's Green Zone, security officials say, 8 December 2023, [url](#); Guardian (The), US troops attacked in Iraq and Syria as west warns of 'spillover' from Israel conflict, 20 October 2023, [url](#); Reuters, US embassy in Baghdad struck with seven mortars as attacks escalate, 9 December 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰¹ AP News, US conducts airstrikes against Iran-backed groups in Syria, retaliating for attacks on US troops, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰² Al Jazeera, Who are the Islamic Resistance in Iraq?, 10 February 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁰³ Al Monitor, Iraqi militias escalate rhetoric against US, threatening more attacks, 9 April 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁴ Crisis24, Iraq: Al-Sadr supporters plan nationwide protests night of April 3, 3 April 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁵ AP News, US conducts airstrikes against Iran-backed groups in Syria, retaliating for attacks on US troops, 13 November 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁶ Al Jazeera, Iraq slams US strikes that killed eight pro-Iran fighters, 22 November 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁷ Al Jazeera, Iraq slams US strikes that killed eight pro-Iran fighters, 22 November 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, Iraqi MPs call for expelling coalition forces, 13 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁸ Rudaw, Iraqi MPs call for expelling coalition forces, 13 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁹ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), Report of the Secretary-General, 25 January 2024, para 28-29, [url](#); Reuters, US embassy in Baghdad struck with seven mortars as attacks escalate, 9 December 2023, [url](#); Bas News, Iraqi Intelligence Agency HQ Attacked with Rockets, 8 December, [url](#)

⁵¹⁰ Reuters, US embassy in Baghdad struck with seven mortars as attacks escalate, 9 December 2023, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Rockets fired towards US embassy in Iraqi capital's Green Zone, 9 December 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹¹ Al Jazeera, Rockets fired towards US embassy in Iraqi capital's Green Zone, 9 December 2023, [url](#)



backed militia, Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HaN),⁵¹² and a deputy commander of PMF. According to PMF media, other six persons were wounded due to the strike.⁵¹³ The US airstrike has been strongly condemned by Prime Minister Al-Sudani, whose office declared his intention to end US presence in the country.⁵¹⁴ Reportedly, HaN conducted 95 out of 136 attacks against US forces since 17 October 2023, when the first wave of attacks took place.⁵¹⁵ On 7 February 2024, a US drone strike killed a leader of the Iranian-backed militia, Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH), and two of his guards, in the eastern part of Baghdad. KH has been deemed responsible by the US for the drone attack on an US base in Jordan on 28 January 2024, causing the death of 3 US soldiers and the injuries of more than 40.⁵¹⁶ No civilian casualties have been recorded as a result of the attack.⁵¹⁷

At the time of writing this report, no attacks have been documented against US targets in Iraq since late January, where commander of Iran's Quds Forces visited Baghdad reportedly ordering armed groups to 'lie low'.⁵¹⁸ Reportedly, this suspension in attacks is due to a political decision of Iranian leaders not to drive militia in a direct war against US.⁵¹⁹ However, as of 1 March 2024, despite the suspension in attacks, an intense presence of US drones in Baghdad airspace was reported.⁵²⁰

Intra Iran-backed militias rivalry

Clashes erupted in December 2023 between Saraya Al-Salam, the PMU linked to the Sadrist Movement, and the Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq (AAH) militia.⁵²¹ Competition among the groups were driven by political conflict between Al Sadr and the CF, and financial competition. In February 2024, clashes among groups resulted in killing of several militia members and wounding of local residents. The Government reportedly did not intervene to limit the clashes.⁵²² Saraya Al-Salam is also in rivalry with KH as they are reportedly competing over land disputes in southern Baghdad, Dora area.⁵²³ Reportedly, since the formation of the Sudani government, in

⁵¹² See: Knights M., Profile: Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, TWI, 27 April 2021, [url](#)

⁵¹³ AP News, Airstrike in central Baghdad kills Iran-backed militia leader as regional tensions escalate, 4 January 2024, [url](#); International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Iraq, January 2024, [url](#); New Arab (The), Explainer: Who was 'Abu Taqwa', the Iraqi militia head assassinated by the US?, 5 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵¹⁴ Reuters, Pentagon says not planning a US withdrawal from Iraq, 8 January 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: December 28, 2023 – January 4, 2024, 4 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵¹⁵ Knights M., Who Are Nujaba and Why Did the U.S. Just Strike Them?, TWI, 4 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵¹⁶ BBC, US drone strike kills Iran-backed militia leader in Baghdad, 8 February 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Who are the Islamic Resistance in Iraq?, 10 February 2024, [url](#)

⁵¹⁷ BBC, US drone strike kills Iran-backed militia leader in Baghdad, 8 February 2024, [url](#); New York times (The), U.S. Strike in Baghdad Kills Iranian-Backed Militia, 7 February 2024, [url](#); AP News, US drone strike in Baghdad kills high-ranking militia leader linked to attacks on American troops, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

⁵¹⁸ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Iraq, February 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Iraqi armed groups dial down U.S. attacks on request of Iran commander, 18 February 2024, [url](#); ISW, Iran Update, January 31, 2024, [url](#)

⁵¹⁹ New York Times (The), After U.S. Strikes, Iran's Proxies Scale Back Attacks on American Bases, 27 February 2024, [url](#)

⁵²⁰ New Arab (The), US drones remain active over Iraq's airspace despite fragile ceasefire, 1 March 2024, [url](#)

⁵²¹ CFRI, Iraq shaken by attacks and political unrest: what can we expect?, 27 December 2023, [url](#); Knights M., Profile: Asaib Ahl al-Haq, TWI, 27 April 2021, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq, December 2023, [url](#)

⁵²² Shafaq News, Iraqi Security at Risk: the conflict between Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq and Saraya Al-Salam, 22 February 2024, [url](#)

⁵²³ EPIC, ISHM: April 6 – 13, 2023, 13 April 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, Ending tension between Saraya al-Sadr and Kataib Hezbollah that almost sparked an armed clash south of Baghdad (photos + video), 9 April 2023, [url](#)



October 2022, clashes between KH military units within PMF and Iraqi Security Forces were also recorded in Baghdad.⁵²⁴

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 361 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Baghdad governorate, of which 157 were coded as battles, 74 explosions/remote violence and 130 incidents of violence against civilians.⁵²⁵ Security incidents were recorded in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in Al Adhamiya, Al Thawra and Al Risafa districts (see Figure 15). According to ACLED data, unidentified armed actors were involved in the majority of incidents (coded as either ‘Actor1’ or ‘Actor2’), particularly where civilians or other unidentified armed actors were coded as an Actor.

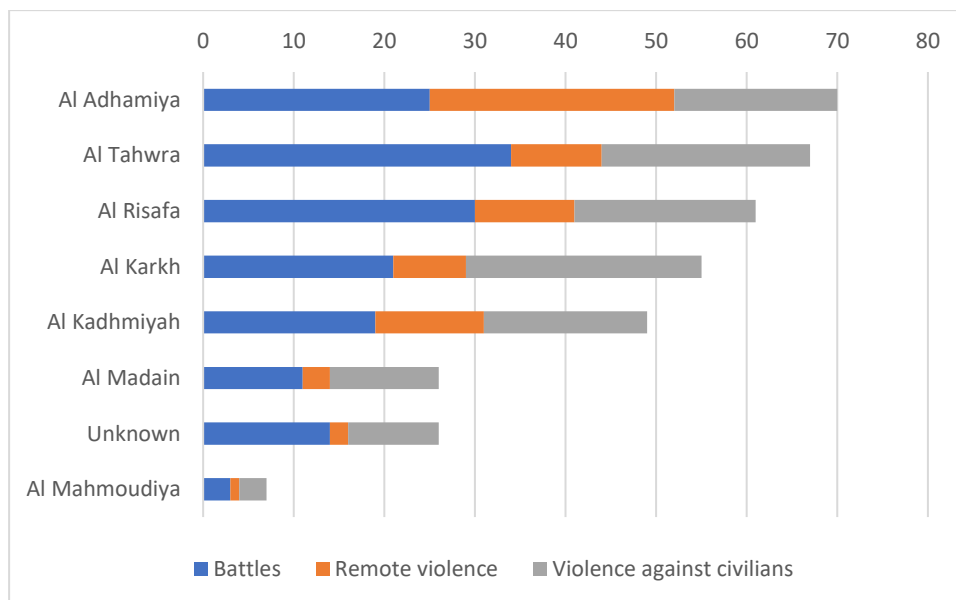


Figure 15. Security events coded battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Baghdad governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.⁵²⁶

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP recorded 9 events leading to fatalities in Baghdad governorate.⁵²⁷

⁵²⁴ Al Kaabi A., Knights M., Kataib Hezbollah’s Escalating Feud with the Iraqi Security Forces, TWI, 19 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵²⁵ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

⁵²⁶ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

⁵²⁷ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024



Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI did not record any civilian casualties in Baghdad governorate.⁵²⁸ For the period 1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024, UCDP recorded 3 civilian deaths in Baghdad governorate.⁵²⁹

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

According to the official data shared by the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA) to Mine Action Review in August 2022, 3 577 320 square meters of legacy mines without evidence of contamination following a technical survey in 2021 in Baghdad's Al-Mahmodiya district.⁵³⁰ In 2022, based on the results of post-activity impact assessment surveys shared by Mine Action Service, 94 % of the land cleared of mines in Iraq is now ready to be used for agriculture, housing, infrastructure and roads.⁵³¹ Further relevant information could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

Conflict-induced displacement and return

As of 31 December 2023, 26 586 IDPs were registered in Baghdad governorate, according to IOM data. Most of IDPs originated by Anbar (10 314), Babil (8 892) and Ninewa (4 464). Within the governorate, districts hosting the largest IDP populations were Mahmodiya (8 736), Abu Ghraib (5 130) and Karkh (4 542). As of September 2022, Al-Latifya subdistrict, located in Mahmodiya district, is hosting the largest number of IDP.⁵³²

Moreover, as of 31 December 2023, IOM documented a total of 44 848 IDPs across the country who originated from Baghdad governorate. Of these, the vast majority were being hosted in Sulaymaniyah (30 168) and Erbil (11 644) governorates.⁵³³

IOM data also show that there were 94 590 returnees in Baghdad governorate as of 31 December 2023, of whom 84 510 had returned from displacement areas within the same governorate. Districts with the highest number of returnees were Mahmodiya and Abu Ghraib.⁵³⁴

⁵²⁸ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

⁵²⁹ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

⁵³⁰ Mine Action Review, Clearing the Mines 2022, 1 October 2022, [url](#), p. 185

⁵³¹ UNSG, Assistance in mine action, Report of the Secretary-General, 31 July 2023, [url](#), para 26

⁵³² REACH, Research Terms of Reference Al-Latifya Area-Based Assessment (ABA) IRQ2207 Iraq (October 2022) Version 1, 13 December 2022, [url](#). On the IDP movement's intentions in Al-Latifya, see: REACH, IDPs in Iraq – Intentions and Profiling: Informal Sites (April 2022), 11 May 2022, [url](#)

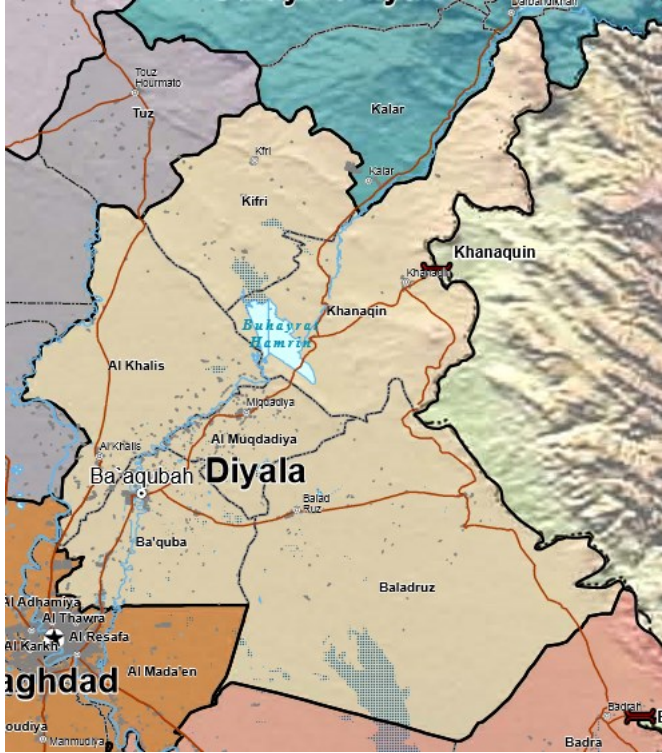
⁵³³ EUAA analysis based on IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File], 31 December 2023, [url](#)

⁵³⁴ EUAA analysis based on IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File], 31 December 2023, [url](#)



With reference to the latest IDP movement's trends, in the reporting period between 1 May and 31 August 2023, IOM recorded an increase of 150 IDPs in Mahmodiya district. The source did not provide information on the reason for displacement.⁵³⁵

2.4. Diyala



Map 5: Diyala governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.⁵³⁶

General description of governorate

Diyala governorate is located in east-central Iraq, sharing internal borders with Sulaymaniyah, Salah Al-Din, Baghdad, and Wassit governorates and an international border with Iran to its east. The governorate is divided into six districts: Al-Baquba (Baquba), Baladrüz (Baladrooz), Al-Khalis, Khanaqin, Kifri and Al-Muqdadia. Its capital is Baquba city.⁵³⁷ The districts of Khanaqin⁵³⁸ and Kifri are part of the northern Iraqi areas whose status is disputed between the KRG and the central government.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁵ IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Report 130, DATA COLLECTION PERIOD: MAY – AUGUST 2023, October 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁵³⁶ UN JAU, Iraq District Map, January 2014, [url](#)

⁵³⁷ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Diyala Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

⁵³⁸ Hussein, H.A., Iraq's Disputed Territories and the Potential Impact of the Upcoming Provincial Elections, TWI, 12 December 2023, [url](#)

⁵³⁹ UNHCR Iraq, Iraq: Kurdistan Region and Northern Governorates [Map], 22 January 2023, [url](#)

The governorate's population in 2022 was estimated at 1 814 368.⁵⁴⁰ The diverse population includes Arabs, Kurds and Turkmen,⁵⁴¹ with all three groups comprising both Sunni and Shia communities.⁵⁴²

For further information on the governorate's ethnic, religious, and tribal composition, please refer to section 2.4.1 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Armed actors' presence and control

For information on the governorate's conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors, including ISF, please refer to sections 2.4.2 and 2.4.3 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

The Diyala Operations Command is headquartered in Baquba city,⁵⁴³ Iran-backed militias under the PMF were also present in the governorate,⁵⁴⁴ as were Border Guard forces stationed in the eastern areas bordering Iran.⁵⁴⁵ There were efforts by the Badr Organisation to maintain and strengthen its security influence in the governorate, as seen in the deployment of its 1st, 23rd, 24th, and 110th Brigades to Diyala in March 2023.⁵⁴⁶ This was followed by the appointment of the Badr-affiliated Major General Akram Mudannaf as head of the Diyala Operations Command in May 2023.⁵⁴⁷

At least since early 2022, sources have noted the presence of the 1st Division of the Iraqi Army in Diyala.⁵⁴⁸ After Iran-backed Shia militias (suspected to be Badr militants)⁵⁴⁹ reportedly killed multiple Sunni civilians in Al-Jayalah, Al-Khalis district, in February⁵⁵⁰ and March 2023, the government deployed Iraqi special forces. However, they were removed under Badr pressure and Badr forces then secured control of the area.⁵⁵¹ In May 2023, the Al-Waqf basin area northeast of Baquba city saw what was reported as the largest deployment of Iraqi forces (federal police and special forces) since 2004, with the aim to improve security after a long absence of stability.⁵⁵² Meanwhile, along the line of control between federal Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan, ISF and Kurdish forces were facing coordination issues reflecting long-standing territorial disputes.⁵⁵³

⁵⁴⁰ Iraq, CSO, [الباب الثاني 2022-2023 المجموعة الإحصائية](#) [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8

⁵⁴¹ UN IAU, Diyala Governorate Profile, March 2009, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁴² Izady, M., Central Iraq: Ethnoreligious Composition in 2020 (summary) [Map], n.d., [url](#)

⁵⁴³ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 19

⁵⁴⁴ New Arab (The), Iraq: Nine people killed in Diyala farm 'massacre', 21 February 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁵ EPIC, ISHM: June 1 – 8, 2023, 8 June 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁶ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, March 16, 2023, 16 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁷ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, May 2, 2023, 2 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁸ PUK Media, Peshmerga Ministry: We condemn the terrorist acts that targeted the army, 22 January 2022, [url](#); PUK Media, Security operation launched in Saladin, Diyala, 15 June 2022, [url](#); INA, Army Chief of Staff issues directives to security forces in Diyala, 19 July 2022, [url](#); Shafaq News, Explosive device injures senior Iraqi army officers in Diyala, 18 September 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁹ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, May 19, 2023, 19 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁰ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, March 1, 2023, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁵¹ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, May 19, 2023, 19 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁵² Shafaq News, Diyala implements extensive security plan in al-Waqf bassin, 22 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁵³ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, [url](#)

ISIL maintained its presence in Diyala,⁵⁵⁴ one of the governorates on which the group focused its operations in Iraq,⁵⁵⁵ through small, decentralised cells⁵⁵⁶ and ‘outposts’. The group’s supply lines ran through mountainous areas where access and patrolling were difficult for the security forces. The group retained its ability to move freely⁵⁵⁷ and operate in and around the disputed areas,⁵⁵⁸ where it maintained strongholds and hideouts. A Peshmerga brigade commander based in Khanaqin was quoted as saying that ISIL militants were manoeuvring unguarded areas, including the outskirts of the Hamrin Basin and peripheral areas of Khanaqin.⁵⁵⁹ As of mid-2023, most of the leaders of the Iraqi branch of ISIL were reportedly present in the Hamrin Mountains.⁵⁶⁰ ISIL used these security gaps along the Iraqi Kurdistan border to enable attacks and supply its cells in mountain and desert zones.⁵⁶¹ In April 2023, the group moved an unconfirmed number of fighters from Khanaqin to the Tooz Khurmato-Kifri area.⁵⁶²

Recent security trends

The overall security situation in Diyala governorate has been described as ‘challenging’⁵⁶³ and ‘tense’.⁵⁶⁴ Apart from periodic ISIL attacks, the governorate saw sectarian violence,⁵⁶⁵ including the alleged killing of nine civilians⁵⁶⁶ by Shia militias in Al-Khalis governorate in February 2023.⁵⁶⁷ While most Sunnis displaced during the war against ISIL have returned to the governorate, they were frequently viewed with suspicion by authorities and neighbours due to their perceived links to the group. When ISIL remnants carried out attacks against civilians or security forces, it would often entail a spiral of retaliatory attacks.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁵⁴ UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, [url](#), para. 32

⁵⁵⁵ UNSG, Sixteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/76, 1 February 2023, [url](#), para. 29

⁵⁵⁶ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 49

⁵⁵⁷ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁸ Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen ambtsbericht Irak [Country report Iraq], November 2023, [url](#), p. 16

⁵⁵⁹ Shafaq News, Kurdish Peshmerga commander reveals ISIS’s hidden movement in Iraq’s border areas, 13 October 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁰ UN Security Council, Letter dated 24 July 2023 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2023/549, 25 July 2023, [url](#), para. 50

⁵⁶¹ UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, [url](#), para. 32

⁵⁶² ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁶³ RWG Iraq and REACH, Rapid assessment on returns and durable solutions (ReDS) Governorate Profiles – Diyala – Iraq, February 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁶⁴ AP, Spiking violence strains sectarian ties in Iraqi province, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁵ Al Jazeera, Gunmen kill 11 in roadside attack in eastern Iraq, 1 December 2023, [url](#); AP, Spiking violence strains sectarian ties in Iraqi province, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁶ AP, Spiking violence strains sectarian ties in Iraqi province, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁷ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, March 1, 2023, 3 March 2023, [url](#); AP, Spiking violence strains sectarian ties in Iraqi province, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁸ AP, Spiking violence strains sectarian ties in Iraqi province, 27 March 2023, [url](#)



Killings were also committed between Shiite groups in the context of rival militias and their political and tribal allies fighting over influence,⁵⁶⁹ including control of high-ranking security positions⁵⁷⁰ and domination of lucrative networks of organised crime. Indeed, the first quarter of 2023 saw a series of instances of communal violence,⁵⁷¹ including a complex militant attack on members of a local tribe in the Al-Muqdadiya district.⁵⁷²

ISIL sustained a ‘low-grade insurgency’ in eastern Iraq,⁵⁷³ with Diyala being one of the governorates seeing a concentration of ISIL activity,⁵⁷⁴ including zones in and around the disputed areas.⁵⁷⁵ The group’s attacks have been described as asymmetrical⁵⁷⁶ as most of its operations were carried out with light weaponry and explosives,⁵⁷⁷ such as simple IEDs, targeted assassinations, small-arms ambushes.⁵⁷⁸ The Hamrin Mountains were among ISIL’s key zones of operation due to gaps in the presence of Iraqi and KRG forces.⁵⁷⁹ Attacks by suspected ISIL militants targeted Iraqi soldiers,⁵⁸⁰ military facilities, security and government officials, local community leaders, and other civilians,⁵⁸¹ with several incidents reported in Al-Baquba (Baquba),⁵⁸² Khanaqin,⁵⁸³ and Al-Muqdadiya districts.⁵⁸⁴

In some deadly incidents, it could not be determined whether they were motivated by insurgency or tribal conflict,⁵⁸⁵ or whether an IED was recent or old.⁵⁸⁶ Several killings were

⁵⁶⁹ AP, Spiking violence strains sectarian ties in Iraqi province, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁰ KirkukNow, Diyala: Special forces assigned by Prime Minister to impose security face political and tribal challenges, 19 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁷¹ AP, Spiking violence strains sectarian ties in Iraqi province, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁷² EPIC, ISHM: March 2 – 9, 2023, 9 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁷³ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, [url](#); USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, July 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023, 9 November 2023, [url](#), p. 12

⁵⁷⁴ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 49; USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 16

⁵⁷⁵ Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen ambtsbericht Irak [Country report Iraq], November 2023, [url](#), p. 16

⁵⁷⁶ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 19

⁵⁷⁷ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 49

⁵⁷⁸ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, January 1, 2023 – March 31, 2023, 2 May 2023, [url](#), p. 10

⁵⁷⁹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 49

⁵⁸⁰ EPIC, ISHM: August 10 – 17, 2023, 17 August 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁸¹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 49

⁵⁸² EPIC, ISHM: August 10 – 17, 2023, 17 August 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: July 13 – 20, 2023, 20 July 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁸³ basnews, Civilian Killed in IS Attack in Khanaqin, 27 February 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁴ Al Jazeera, Gunmen kill 11 in roadside attack in eastern Iraq, 1 December 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: May 11 – 18, 2023, 18 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁵ EPIC, ISHM: March 16 – 30, 2023, 30 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁶ EPIC, ISHM: May 25 – June 1, 2023, 1 June 2023, [url](#)



reported to have been carried out by unidentified perpetrators against civilians in Al-Baquba (Baquba),⁵⁸⁷ Baladruz,⁵⁸⁸ Khanaqin,⁵⁸⁹ and Al-Khalis.⁵⁹⁰

In response to ISIL activity, the ISF continued to carry out anti-terrorism operations,⁵⁹¹ including airstrikes targeting the ISIL hideouts in Kifri district,⁵⁹² the Al-Waqf⁵⁹³ and Hawi Al-Azim areas,⁵⁹⁴ as well as in the Hamrin Mountains and Hamrin Lake area.⁵⁹⁵ Moreover, the security forces conducted ground operations, including an arrest campaign launched across the governorate in March 2023⁵⁹⁶ and a joint security operation in the Diyala-Salah Al-Din border zone in February 2024.⁵⁹⁷ In June 2023, the Border Guard forces started a security campaign aiming to close illegal smuggling routes in the town of Qazaniyah on the border with Iran.⁵⁹⁸

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 96 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Diyala governorate, of which 26 were coded as battles, 43 explosions/remote violence, and 27 incidents of violence against civilians.⁵⁹⁹ Security incidents were recorded in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in Al Baquba and Al Muqdadiya districts (see Figure 16). According to ACLED data, unidentified armed actors were involved in the majority of incidents coded as violence against civilians, whereas ISIL was mainly involved in incidents coded as battles, and explosions/remote violence against ISF and affiliated armed groups.

⁵⁸⁷ NINA, The body of a civilian found in Baquba, 23 May 2023, [url](#); NINA, A doctor assassinated in Baquba, 22 February 2023

⁵⁸⁸ NINA, A farmer killed by unknown gunmen in Diyala, 28 February 2023

⁵⁸⁹ NINA, The body of a young man found mysteriously killed in Diyala, 26 July 2023

⁵⁹⁰ NINA, The assassination of a civilian in Al-Khalis, in Diyala, 3 March 2023

⁵⁹¹ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 19; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 24

⁵⁹² Rudaw, Iraqi warplanes strike suspected ISIS members in Diyala, 7 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁹³ Asharq Al-Awsat, Iraqi Security Conducts a Successful Operation Against ISIS, 8 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁴ Shafaq News, Iraqi forces destroy ISIS hideouts in Diyala, 5 February 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁵ EPIC, ISHM: March 16 – 30, 2023, 30 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁶ KirkukNow, Diyala: Special forces assigned by Prime Minister to impose security face political and tribal challenges, 19 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁷ SABA, Iraqi forces start chasing Daesh elements in Diyala, Saladin, 7 February 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁸ EPIC, ISHM: June 1 – 8, 2023, 8 June 2023, [url](#); Financial Tribune, Baghdad Launches Plan to Close 20 Smuggling Routes With Iran, 9 June 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁹ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

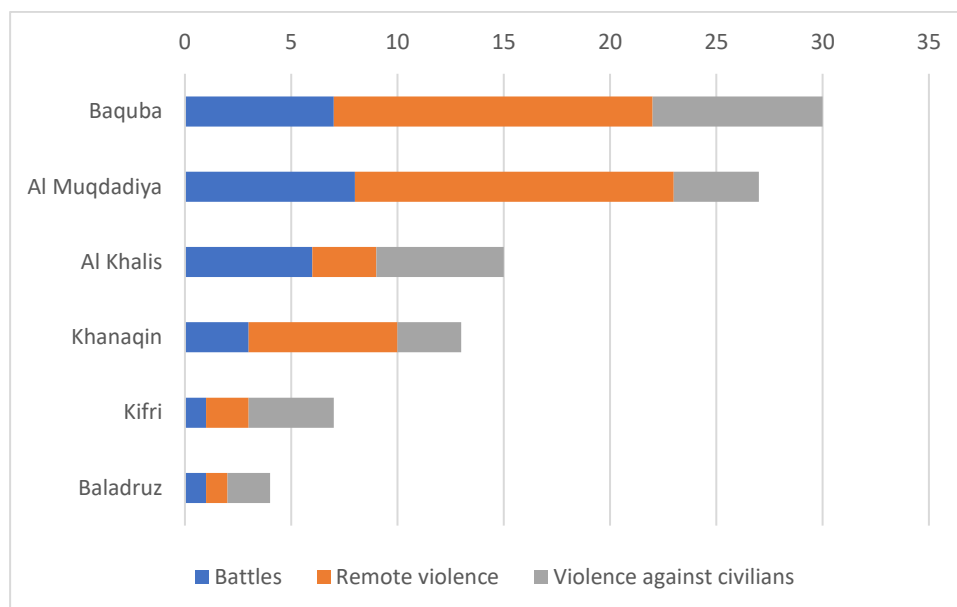


Figure 16. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Diyala governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.⁶⁰⁰

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 29 February 2024, the UCDP recorded 14 events leading to fatalities in Diyala governorate.⁶⁰¹

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 43 civilian casualties in Diyala governorate.⁶⁰²

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 29 February 2024, the UCDP recorded 22 civilian deaths in Diyala governorate.⁶⁰³

⁶⁰⁰ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

⁶⁰¹ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

⁶⁰² EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

⁶⁰³ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

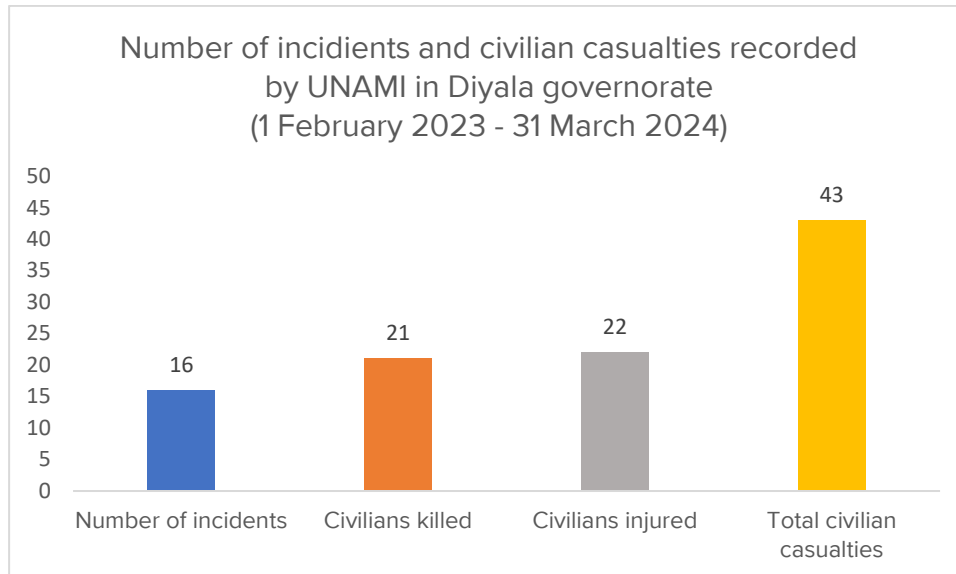


Figure 17. Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI in Diyala governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.⁶⁰⁴

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

No information on new conflict-related infrastructure damage occurring in the reference period could be found within the time constraints of this report. According to a February 2023 assessment of four Diyala sub-districts (located in Al-Muqdadiya, Al-Khalis, Kifri, and Khanaqin districts),⁶⁰⁵ the degree of destruction and damage to houses was ‘very high’. Government reconstruction efforts were assessed to be ‘either absent, delayed, or only limited to specific areas’.⁶⁰⁶ As of the end of 2022, the Mine Action Review did not report any cluster munition-contaminated areas in Diyala governorate.⁶⁰⁷ Several civilians were killed or injured by explosive remnants of war in Khanaqin district,⁶⁰⁸ Buhruz, Khan Bani Saad⁶⁰⁹ and Mandili subdistricts,⁶¹⁰ and in the Al-Waqf Basin⁶¹¹ and in the Wadi Tursaq area.⁶¹²

⁶⁰⁴ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

⁶⁰⁵ RWG Iraq and REACH, Rapid assessment on returns and durable solutions (ReDS) Governorate Profiles – Diyala – Iraq, February 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁶⁰⁶ RWG Iraq and REACH, Rapid assessment on returns and durable solutions (ReDS) Governorate Profiles – Diyala – Iraq, February 2023, [url](#), p. 7

⁶⁰⁷ Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 61

⁶⁰⁸ EPIC, ISHM: February 23 – March 2, 2023, 2 March 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁹ EPIC, ISHM: May 25 – June 1, 2023, 1 June 2023, [url](#)

⁶¹⁰ EPIC, ISHM: March 21 – 28, 2024, 28 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶¹¹ NINA, A Child Killed And His Father Injured In An IED Explosion In Al-Waqf Basin, Northeast Of Baqubah, 22 September 2023, [url](#)

⁶¹² EPIC, ISHM: March 21 – 28, 2024, 28 March 2024, [url](#)

Conflict-induced displacement and return

No information could be found on new conflict-induced displacements occurring in Diyala during the reference period. IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)⁶¹³ statistics as of December 2023 estimate the number of IDPs originating from Diyala to be 71 208 IDPs.⁶¹⁴

The majority of Sunnis displaced from Diyala during the war against ISIL have returned.⁶¹⁵ As of 31 December 2023, IOM recorded 241 236 returnees in the governorate.⁶¹⁶ No information could be found on new returns occurring in Diyala during the reference period.

2.5. Kirkuk



Map 6: Kirkuk governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.⁶¹⁷

⁶¹³ Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁶¹⁴ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

⁶¹⁵ AP, Spiking violence strains sectarian ties in Iraqi province, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

⁶¹⁶ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

⁶¹⁷ UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, [url](#)

General description of governorate

Kirkuk governorate is located in north-central Iraq and shares internal borders with Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Diyala, Salah Al-Din, and Ninewa governorates. The governorate is divided into four districts: Kirkuk, Dibis (Dabes), Al-Hawija (Al-Hawiga), and Daquq. Its capital is the city of Kirkuk.⁶¹⁸ The entire governorate is part of the northern Iraqi areas, whose status is disputed between the KRG and the central government.⁶¹⁹

Kirkuk governorate's population in 2022 was estimated at 1 770 765.⁶²⁰ The multi-ethnic governorate is home to Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen,⁶²¹ and Chaldo-Assyrians.⁶²² All of these groups are present in Kirkuk city.⁶²³

For further information on the governorate's ethno-religious composition as well as its economy, please refer to section 2.5.1 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Armed actors' presence and control

For information on the governorate's conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to sections 2.5.2 and 2.5.3 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Since 2017, the Joint Operations Command (JOC)'s Forward Command Kirkuk⁶²⁴ has been headquartered in premises in Kirkuk city that were previously used as the Kirkuk main office of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)'s leadership.⁶²⁵ The Kirkuk JOC encompasses the Iraqi Army, the PMF, the Iraqi federal police, and the local police.⁶²⁶ A decision by Prime Minister Al-Sudani to transfer the headquarters back to the KRG forces was suspended after protesters took to the streets and deadly clashes erupted in September 2023.⁶²⁷ Meanwhile, the Iraqi government's agenda also included the transfer of the internal security file for Kirkuk city and Al-Hawija (Al-Hawiga) district from the army to the federal police.⁶²⁸ Thus, in the area stretching from Daquq district up to Rashad subdistrict of Al-Hawija (Al-Hawiga) district, the checkpoints of the 18th and 20th Brigades of the 5th Division of the federal police were handed

⁶¹⁸ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Kirkuk Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

⁶¹⁹ UNHCR Iraq, Iraq: Kurdistan Region and Northern Governorates [Map], 22 January 2023, [url](#); Hussein, H.A., Iraq's Disputed Territories and the Potential Impact of the Upcoming Provincial Elections, TWI, 12 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶²⁰ Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8

⁶²¹ New Arab (The), What is driving ethnic tensions in Iraq's Kirkuk?, 13 September 2023, [url](#); CFRI, The Turkmen in Iraq: Fragmentation dynamics, ethnic contact lines and sectarian fractures, 21 July 2023, [url](#)

⁶²² International Crisis Group, Iraq: Fixing Security in Kirkuk, 15 June 2020, [url](#)

⁶²³ Rudaw, Troops to withdraw from Kirkuk neighborhood at Iraqi PM's orders: Lawmaker, 3 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶²⁴ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 19

⁶²⁵ KirkukNow, It's PM's decision to take back all our headquarters in Kirkuk, KDP, 28 August 2023, [url](#)

⁶²⁶ KirkukNow, Kirkuk police ready to take over security in town, locals seek fair treatment, 7 February 2023, [url](#)

⁶²⁷ Madwar, S., A war over the city: Exploring Kirkuk's multi-layered conflict, Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, 10 September 2023, [url](#)

⁶²⁸ Kurdistan24, Kirkuk security dossier to be handled by Iraqi federal police, says minister, 25 January 2024, [url](#)

over to the Iraqi Army's 11th Division.⁶²⁹ As of March 2024, the 11th Division was setting up its new headquarters in Rashad.⁶³⁰

The PMF factions in the governorate included the PMF Brigades 16⁶³¹ (Quwat al-Turkmen)⁶³² and 52, both of which were composed of Shiite Turkmen,⁶³³ and the Sunni Brigade 61.⁶³⁴ There was also a presence of Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq (AAH) militias.⁶³⁵ The 16th Brigade, the PMF's East Dijlah faction⁶³⁶ and the newly-formed 500-strong Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis force were all reported to be present at Kirkuk airport.⁶³⁷

ISIL maintained its presence in Kirkuk⁶³⁸ through small, decentralised cells,⁶³⁹ strongholds and hideouts.⁶⁴⁰ The governorate (including its Wadi Al-Shay region⁶⁴¹) remained one of the group's key areas of operation in Iraq.⁶⁴² The group's supply lines ran through areas of Kirkuk⁶⁴³ that were difficult to access and patrol for the security forces due to mountainous terrain. The group retained its ability to move freely⁶⁴⁴ and operate in and around the disputed areas.⁶⁴⁵ ISIL used security gaps along the Iraqi Kurdistan border to conduct attacks and supply its cells in mountain and desert zones.⁶⁴⁶

Recent security trends

While the overall situation in Kirkuk governorate has been characterised by a 'security vacuum' due to a limited presence of Iraqi federal forces since the withdrawal of Kurdish Peshmerga in 2017,⁶⁴⁷ the situation in the city of Kirkuk was reported to have remained

⁶²⁹ KirkukNow, Kirkuk police ready to take over security in town, locals seek fair treatment, 7 February 2023, [url](#)

⁶³⁰ EPIC, ISHM: March 14 – 21, 2024, 21 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶³¹ KirkukNow, They Are in Control, 23 February 2022, [url](#); INA, Security operation launched in Kirkuk: PMF, 3 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶³² TWI, Infighting Between Northern Hashd Units Requires IRGC-QF Mediation, 6 July 2023, [url](#)

⁶³³ KirkukNow, They Are in Control, 23 February 2022, [url](#)

⁶³⁴ WKI, Kirkuk Minute April 6, 2023, 6 April 2023, [url](#)

⁶³⁵ Rudaw, Shiite militias, supporters block main Kirkuk-Erbil highway, 29 August 2023, [url](#)

⁶³⁶ EPIC, ISHM: May 18 – 25, 2023, 25 May 2023, [url](#)

⁶³⁷ Ekurd Daily, Iran's Grip on Kirkuk, 4 March 2023, [url](#)

⁶³⁸ UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, [url](#), para. 32

⁶³⁹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 49

⁶⁴⁰ Shafaq News, Kurdish Peshmerga commander reveals ISIS's hidden movement in Iraq's border areas, 13 October 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁴¹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 49

⁶⁴² UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 49; USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 16

⁶⁴³ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, February 22, 2023, 24 February 2024, [url](#); ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁴ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁵ Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen ambtsbericht Irak [Country report Iraq], November 2023, [url](#), p. 16

⁶⁴⁶ UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, [url](#), para. 32

⁶⁴⁷ Hussein, H.A., Iraq's Disputed Territories and the Potential Impact of the Upcoming Provincial Elections, TWI, 12 December 2023, [url](#)

‘generally stable’ until summer 2023.⁶⁴⁸ The early months of the reference period, however, saw rising tensions between Kurdish, Arab, and Turkmen communities.⁶⁴⁹

On 28 August 2023, Turkmen and Arab demonstrators staged a sit-in protest outside the JOC headquarters in Kirkuk city⁶⁵⁰ and blocked the main road leading from Kirkuk to Erbil.⁶⁵¹ Kurdish sources claimed that PMF, including individuals linked to AAH,⁶⁵² were involved in these protests.⁶⁵³ The situation reportedly escalated when Kurdish counter-protesters arrived and security forces were deployed to the area. According to witnesses interviewed by Human Rights Watch, at least four individuals were killed (all of them ethnic Kurds) and another 16 were injured when security forces opened fire on protesters on 2 September 2023.⁶⁵⁴

Meanwhile, ISIL sustained a ‘low-grade insurgency’ in the disputed areas,⁶⁵⁵ and Kirkuk was one of the governorates that saw a concentration of ISIL operations.⁶⁵⁶ The group’s attacks were asymmetrical in nature,⁶⁵⁷ as it conducted most operations using light weaponry and explosives⁶⁵⁸ (simple IEDs, targeted assassinations, small-arms ambushes).⁶⁵⁹ According to the Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI), the group was intensifying its operations in the governorate.⁶⁶⁰ The Wadi Al-Shay area in Daquq district⁶⁶¹ was among ISIL’s key zones of operation due to ‘perceived gaps’ in the presence of Iraqi and KRG forces.⁶⁶² Attacks attributed to ISIL targeted members and facilities of the ISF⁶⁶³ (including police⁶⁶⁴) as well as the PMF⁶⁶⁵ and were reported in Daquq,⁶⁶⁶ Dibis,⁶⁶⁷ and Al-Hawija (Al-Hawiga) districts⁶⁶⁸ and

⁶⁴⁸ Madwar, S., A war over the city: Exploring Kirkuk’s multi-layered conflict, Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, 10 September 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁹ HRW, Iraq: Security Forces Open Fire on Kirkuk Protesters, 8 September 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁰ Al Jazeera, Kirkuk curfew lifted after deadly unrest at rival protests by Arabs, Kurds, 2 September 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁵¹ HRW, Iraq: Security Forces Open Fire on Kirkuk Protesters, 8 September 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁵² Rudaw, Shiite militias, supporters block main Kirkuk-Erbil highway, 29 August 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁵³ Rudaw, People of Kirkuk have coexisted for thousands of years: Military commander, 5 September 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: August 31 – September 7, 2023, 7 September 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁴ HRW, Iraq: Security Forces Open Fire on Kirkuk Protesters, 8 September 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁵ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁶ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 49; USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 16

⁶⁵⁷ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 19

⁶⁵⁸ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 49

⁶⁵⁹ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, January 1, 2023 – March 31, 2023, 2 May 2023, [url](#), p. 10

⁶⁶⁰ WKI, Kirkuk Minute | March 14, 2024, 14 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁶¹ NPA, Iraqi Security Forces kill prominent ISIS member in Kirkuk, 13 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁶² UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 49

⁶⁶³ EPIC, ISHM: December 7 – 14, 2023, 14 December 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: June 8 – 15, 2023, 15 June 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: March 30 – April 6, 2023, 6 April 2023, [url](#); USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, April 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023, 3 August 2023, [url](#), p. 12

⁶⁶⁴ Rudaw, Police officer killed by unidentified assailants in Kirkuk, 28 December 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: December 14 – 28, 2023, 28 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁵ EPIC, ISHM: December 7 – 14, 2023, 14 December 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: March 30 – April 6, 2023, 6 April 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁶ EPIC, ISHM: December 7 – 14, 2023, 14 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁷ EPIC, ISHM: June 8 – 15, 2023, 15 June 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: March 30 – April 6, 2023, 6 April 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁸ WKI, Kirkuk Minute April 6, 2023, 6 April 2023, [url](#)



Kirkuk city.⁶⁶⁹ ISIL operations also caused several civilian casualties in Kirkuk city and Rashad subdistrict,⁶⁷⁰ as did attacks by unidentified gunmen whose victims included the son of a police chief (south of Kirkuk city),⁶⁷¹ the brother of a police colonel (Kirkuk city)⁶⁷² and two off-duty Iraqi Army soldiers (Daquq district).⁶⁷³ An unidentified armed group also opened fire at the home of a local Mukhtar in the same district.⁶⁷⁴

In response to ISIL activity, the ISF continued to carry out anti-terrorism operations,⁶⁷⁵ including airstrikes on ISIL hideouts in Dibis district,⁶⁷⁶ Wadi Zghaytoun (southern Kirkuk),⁶⁷⁷ and Wadi Al-Shay⁶⁷⁸ (where ISIL Iraq branch leaders were reported to be present),⁶⁷⁹ as well as ground raids in the same areas.⁶⁸⁰ Besides coordinating operations with security authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan,⁶⁸¹ in early 2024, the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) for the first time since October 2017, conducted a joint operation with Kurdish Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) forces.⁶⁸²

Apart from these developments, US forces conducted at least one airstrike on an Iran-backed militia of unclear affiliation (in December 2023).⁶⁸³ Moreover, two PMF factions (the 16th Brigade and the East Dijlah faction) clashed near Kirkuk airport.⁶⁸⁴

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 96 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Kirkuk governorate, of which 29 were coded as battles, 47 explosions/remote violence, and 20 incidents of violence against civilians.⁶⁸⁵ Security incidents were recorded in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in Daquq and Kirkuk districts (see Figure 18). According to ACLED data, ISF and affiliated armed groups and ISIL were involved in the majority of events coded as battles and

⁶⁶⁹ Rudaw, Police officer killed by unidentified assailants in Kirkuk, 28 December 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: December 14 – 28, 2023, 28 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁰ EPIC, ISHM: July 13 – 20, 2023, 20 July 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: December 14 – 28, 2023, 28 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁷¹ NINA, Assassination of the son of Suleiman Beg Police Chief, south of Kirkuk, 12 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷² EPIC, ISHM: ISHM: February 29 – March 7, 2024, 7 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷³ EPIC, ISHM: March 21 – 28, 2024, 28 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁴ EPIC, ISHM: March 7 – 14, 2024, 14 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁵ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 19; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 24

⁶⁷⁶ Rudaw, Four alleged ISIS militants arrested in Iraq, 4 September 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁷ EPIC, ISHM: September 14 – 21, 2023, 21 September 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁸ EPIC, ISHM: January 4 – 11, 2024, 11 January 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: August 10 – 17, 2023, 17 August 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: April 13 – 20, 2023, 20 April 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: ISHM: February 29 – March 7, 2024, 7 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 24 July 2023 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2023/549, 25 July 2023, [url](#), para. 50

⁶⁸⁰ Shafaq News, Three ISIS terrorists killed in clashes with CTS in Kirkuk, 14 November 2023, [url](#); Diyaruna, ISIS remnants on back foot in former northern Iraq stronghold, 11 July 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, Iraq's CTS Kills Five ISIS Members in Kirkuk, 7 July 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸¹ Diyaruna, ISIS remnants on back foot in former northern Iraq stronghold, 11 July 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸² KirkukNow, First since October 2017, Kurdish commando force in joint security operation south of Kirkuk, 8 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁸³ Al-Kaabi, A., Overlap Between the Islamic Resistance in Iraq and the Popular Mobilization Forces, TWI, 12 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁴ EPIC, ISHM: May 18 – 25, 2023, 25 May 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁵ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)



explosions/remote violence, while unidentified armed groups were mainly involved in incidents coded as violence against civilians.

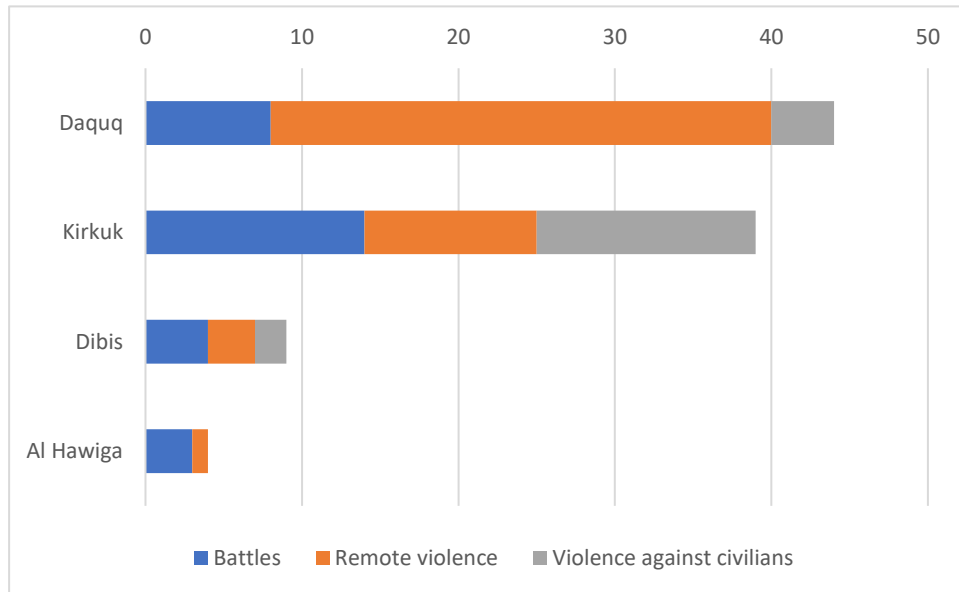


Figure 18. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Kirkuk governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.⁶⁸⁶

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 19 events leading to fatalities in Kirkuk governorate.⁶⁸⁷

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 8 civilian casualties in Kirkuk governorate.⁶⁸⁸ For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Kirkuk governorate.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁶ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

⁶⁸⁷ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

⁶⁸⁸ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

⁶⁸⁹ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

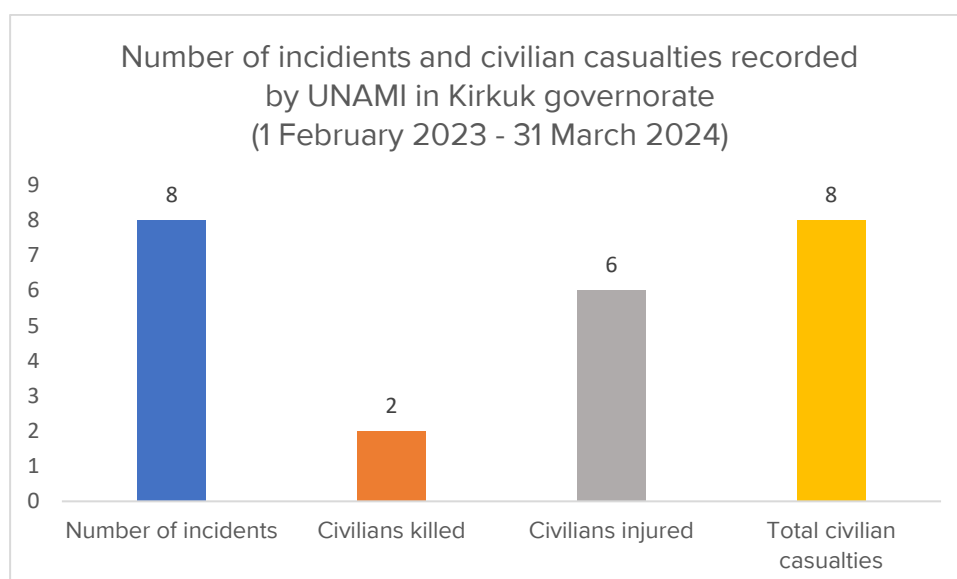


Figure 19. Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI in Kirkuk governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.⁶⁹⁰

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

No information on new conflict-related infrastructure damage in the reference period could be found within the time constraints of this report. As of the end of 2022, the Mine Action Review did not report any cluster munition-contaminated areas in Kirkuk governorate.⁶⁹¹ A likely war remnant was reported to have killed a civilian in the Al-Faylaq area north of Kirkuk city⁶⁹² while explosive remnants of war also killed or injured civilians in the vicinity of the town of Al-Bashir,⁶⁹³ in the Bor Mountain area⁶⁹⁴

Conflict-induced displacement and return

No information could be found on new conflict-induced displacements occurring in Kirkuk during the reference period. However, there were attempts by the Iraqi army to evict Kurdish residents of Topzawa village and Kirkuk city's Newroz neighbourhood.⁶⁹⁵ IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)⁶⁹⁶ statistics as of December 2023 estimate the number of IDPs originating from Kirkuk to be 72 638.⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹⁰ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

⁶⁹¹ Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 61

⁶⁹² NINA, A civilian died in the explosion of war remnants north of Kirkuk, 15 November 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁹³ EPIC, ISHM: March 21 – 28, 2024, 28 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁴ EPIC, ISHM: March 7 – 14, 2024, 14 March 2024, [url](#)

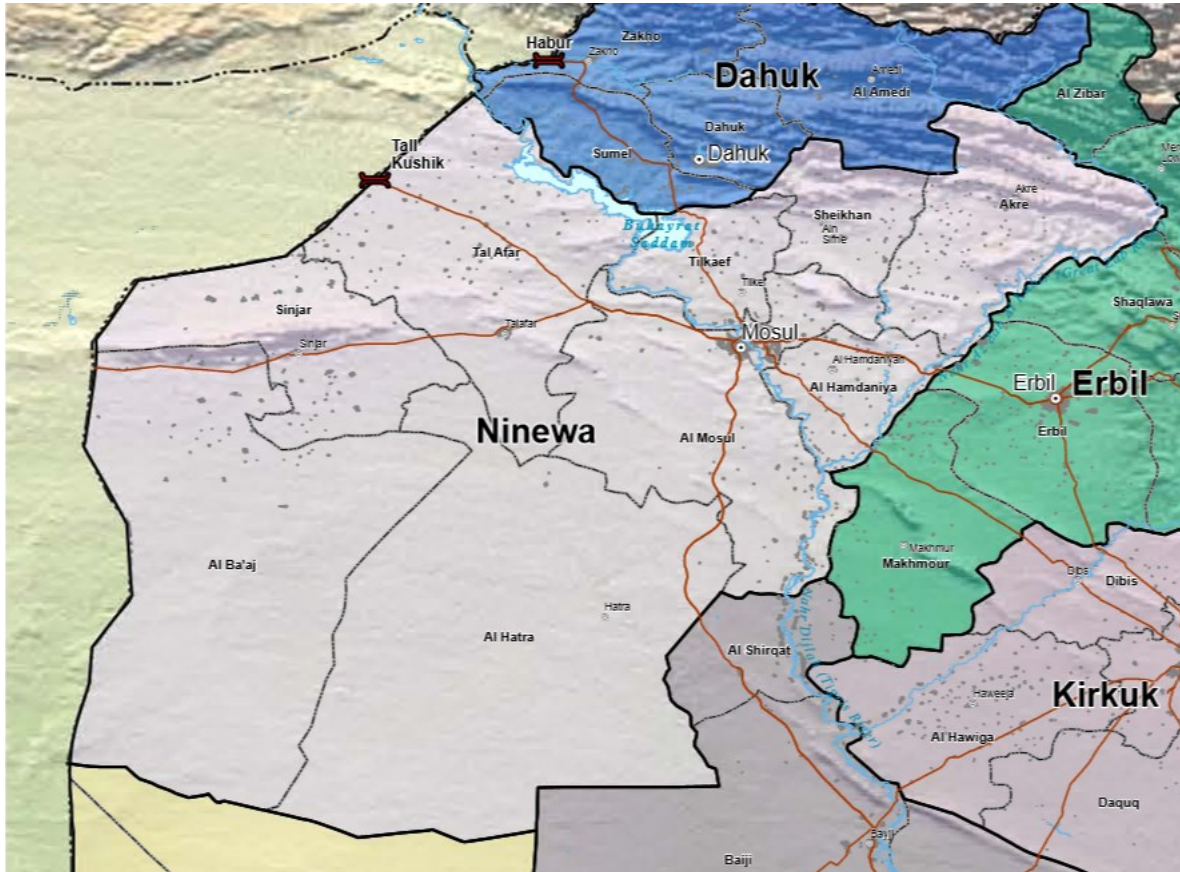
⁶⁹⁵ WKI, Kirkuk Minute January 4, 2024, 4 January 2024, [url](#); Rudaw, Troops to withdraw from Kirkuk neighborhood at Iraqi PM's orders: Lawmaker, 3 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁶ Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁶⁹⁷ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

No new information could be found on returns occurring in Kirkuk during the reference period. As of December 2023, 191 922 individuals have returned to Kirkuk. The vast majority of returnees were recorded in Al-Hawija (Al-Hawiga) district.⁶⁹⁸

2.6. Ninewa



Map 7: Ninewa governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.⁶⁹⁹

General description of governorate

Ninewa (or Nineveh) governorate is located in northern Iraq.⁷⁰⁰ It shares internal borders with the KRI governorates⁷⁰¹ of Erbil and Dohuk, as well as Anbar and Salah al-Din governorates. To its west, Ninewa shares an international border with Syria. The governorate comprises the following districts: Mosul (Al-Mosul), Tel Afar (Telafar), Al-Hamdaniya, Al-Shikhan, Akre (Aqra), Tel Kayf (Tilkaef), Al-Hatra, Sinjar, and Al-Ba'aj (Al-Baaj).⁷⁰² Its capital is the city of Mosul.⁷⁰³

⁶⁹⁸ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁹ UN JAU, Iraq District Map, January 2014, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁰ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Ninewa Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

⁷⁰¹ Balanche, F., Iraq and Syria: Kurdish Autonomous Regions Under Threat, Groupe d'Etudes Géopolitiques, 4 March 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁰² UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Ninewa Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

⁷⁰³ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Ninewa Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

Several of the governorate's territories belong to the northern Iraqi areas whose status is disputed between the KRG and the central government,⁷⁰⁴ one of them being Sinjar district.⁷⁰⁵

Ninewa governorate's population in 2022 was estimated at 4 133 536.⁷⁰⁶ The governorate is home to a variety of ethnic and religious groups, including Kurds, Sunni Arabs, Turkmen, Christians, and Yazidis.⁷⁰⁷

For further information on the governorate's ethno-religious composition as well as its economy, please refer to section 2.6.1 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Armed actors' presence and control

For information on the governorate's conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, including ISF, please refer to sections 2.6.2 and 2.6.3 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Ninewa governorate has a significant Iraqi military presence.⁷⁰⁸ The Ninewa Operations Command and the West Ninewa Operations Command are both headquartered in Mosul⁷⁰⁹ providing operational control of the ISF at the governorate level.⁷¹⁰

Iraqi Army divisions operating in the governorate included the 16th Division⁷¹¹ under the Ninewa Operations Command⁷¹² and the newly formed⁷¹³ 21st Division.⁷¹⁴ The West Ninewa Operations Command included the infantry Brigades 15 and 20, the 6th Command of the Border Guards, as well as PMF units.⁷¹⁵ A number of military units and checkpoints have recently been set up along the strategic Al-Tharthar line between Salah Al-Din and Al-Hatra.⁷¹⁶ PMF brigades operating in Ninewa governorate included Brigades 33,⁷¹⁷ 44 (Liwa Ansar Al-Marjaiya, based in Al-Hatra),⁷¹⁸ and 57.⁷¹⁹

⁷⁰⁴ UNHCR Iraq, Iraq: Kurdistan Region and Northern Governorates [Map], 22 January 2023, [url](#); USIP, Iraq's Provincial Council Elections: The Way Forward in Nineveh Province, 13 December 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁵ HRW, Iraq: Political Infighting Blocking Reconstruction of Sinjar, 6 June 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁶ Iraq, CSO, *المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني* [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8

⁷⁰⁷ USIP, Iraq's Provincial Council Elections: The Way Forward in Nineveh Province, 13 December 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁸ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, February 1, 2023, 1 February 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁹ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 19

⁷¹⁰ Knights M., Almeida A., Kadhim's Rolling Reshuffle (Part 1): Military Command Changes, TWI, 14 September 2020, [url](#)

⁷¹¹ INA, A joint force launch a large-scale security operation in western Nineveh, 7 April 2023, [url](#)

⁷¹² Shafaq News, Al-Falahi commences his duties as commander of Nineveh Operations command, 1 April 2021, [url](#)

⁷¹³ INA, The Commander-in-Chief agrees to form the 21st Division in Salah al-Din, 24 February 2023, [url](#)

⁷¹⁴ Shafaq News, Nineveh: PMF arrest member linked to ISIS's 'army of Al-Asrah', 5 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹⁵ Shafaq News, Iraqi Security Forces Carry Out an Inspection Operation in a Critical Territory, 5 August 2023, [url](#)

⁷¹⁶ INA, Al-Sudani gives directions during a visit to military units, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹⁷ INA, A joint force launch a large-scale security operation in western Nineveh, 7 April 2023, [url](#)

⁷¹⁸ INA, PM: An end is deserved to the existence of the international coalition in Iraq, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹⁹ EPIC, ISHM: May 4 – 11, 2023, 11 May 2023, [url](#)

Multiple security actors were present in the Ninewa Plains,⁷²⁰ including the 30th PMF Brigade (Hashd Al-Shabak),⁷²¹ which controlled the town of Bartella,⁷²² and the Iran-backed 50th PMF Brigade (Kata'ib Babiliyoun, KB). The Ninewa Plains Protection Units (NPU), a 500-strong local Christian regiment⁷²³ that receives orders from the Ninewa Operations Command and is part of the PMF umbrella, controlled the Christian town of Qaraqosh.⁷²⁴ In March 2023, local residents repelled an attempt by KB to seize the command of an NPU base in Al-Hamdaniya.⁷²⁵ Turkish forces were also present in this region.⁷²⁶

Sinjar district was characterised by a multitude of armed groups. These included PKK-linked groups and PMF units⁷²⁷ such as the 30th Brigade, the Yazidi-composed 80th Brigade⁷²⁸ (many of whose fighters are from the pro-PKK militia Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS)),⁷²⁹ and the Badr- and KH-backed 53rd Brigade (Kata'ib Imam Hussein, also present in Tel Afar (Telafar)).⁷³⁰ While there were also other armed actors including local and federal police, the Iraqi Army, local *Asayish* and local and KRG Peshmerga,⁷³¹ security in most areas of Sinjar was handled by the PMF and smaller local militias established by the PMF, with the YBS made the foremost of its junior partners', as assessed by International Crisis Group.⁷³² The district saw further recruitment efforts by PMF forces during the reference period.⁷³³

ISIL maintained small, decentralised cells in the governorate⁷³⁴ and had supply lines running from Ninewa into Salah Al-Din, Kirkuk, and Diyala.⁷³⁵ The governorate's particularities, including its large size, permitted militants to move relatively inconspicuously.⁷³⁶ The group had strongholds and hideouts in the disputed areas⁷³⁷ and used security gaps along the Iraqi Kurdistan border to enable attacks and supply its cells in mountain and desert areas.⁷³⁸ The

⁷²⁰ Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, 'They Are in Control': The rise of paramilitary forces and the security of minorities in Iraq's disputed territories, January 2022, [url](#), p. 17

⁷²¹ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, December 1, 2023, 1 December 2023, [url](#)

⁷²² Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, 'They Are in Control': The rise of paramilitary forces and the security of minorities in Iraq's disputed territories, January 2022, [url](#), p. 19

⁷²³ Beth-Addai, Y., Nineveh Plains Christians Defend Against the Babiliyoun Militia, TWI, 16 March 2023, [url](#)

⁷²⁴ Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, 'They Are in Control': The rise of paramilitary forces and the security of minorities in Iraq's disputed territories, January 2022, [url](#), p. 17

⁷²⁵ Beth-Addai, Y., Nineveh Plains Christians Defend Against the Babiliyoun Militia, TWI, 16 March 2023, [url](#)

⁷²⁶ Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, 'They Are in Control': The rise of paramilitary forces and the security of minorities in Iraq's disputed territories, January 2022, [url](#), p. 22

⁷²⁷ Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, 'They Are in Control': The rise of paramilitary forces and the security of minorities in Iraq's disputed territories, January 2022, [url](#), p. 25

⁷²⁸ Malik, H., et al., Profile: Ahrar Sinjar, TWI, 8 June 2022, [url](#)

⁷²⁹ KirkukNow, Shingal (Sinjar): Seven people killed in three days, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

⁷³⁰ Malik, H., et al., Profile: Ahrar Sinjar, TWI, 8 June 2022, [url](#)

⁷³¹ KirkukNow, Shingal (Sinjar): Seven people killed in three days, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

⁷³² International Crisis Group, Iraq: Stabilising the Contested District of Sinjar, 31 May 2022, [url](#), p. 7

⁷³³ KirkukNow, Shingal: PMF recruits locals for new brigade, 11 April 2023, [url](#)

⁷³⁴ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 49

⁷³⁵ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, [url](#)

⁷³⁶ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, February 1, 2023, 1 February 2023, [url](#)

⁷³⁷ Shafaq News, Kurdish Peshmerga commander reveals ISIS's hidden movement in Iraq's border areas, 13 October 2023, [url](#)

⁷³⁸ UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, [url](#), para. 32

group also exploited the porous Syrian-Iraqi border, through which some ISIL leaders and fighters infiltrated into the governorate.⁷³⁹

Recent security trends

ISIL sustained a ‘low-grade insurgency’ in the disputed areas⁷⁴⁰ and Ninewa was one of the governorates that saw a concentration of ISIL operations,⁷⁴¹ although the group has reduced its attacks in the governorate.⁷⁴² During the reference period, activities attributed to ISIL included the killing of an abducted soldier in Gwer subdistrict⁷⁴³ and the planting of IEDs striking civilians in Mosul⁷⁴⁴ and Sinjar.⁷⁴⁵ In response to ISIL activity, the ISF continued to carry out anti-terrorism operations,⁷⁴⁶ including jointly with Peshmerga forces.⁷⁴⁷ Such operations were reported in Mosul city,⁷⁴⁸ the Shanaf region⁷⁴⁹ (Al-Hamdaniyah district),⁷⁵⁰ in Al-Hatra district,⁷⁵¹ in the Qara Chokh mountains south of Mosul,⁷⁵² and on the strategic road leading towards the governorate’s west.⁷⁵³

A number of targeted attacks with casualties were reported to have been carried out by unidentified perpetrators against civilians in Sinjar⁷⁵⁴ and Tel Afar (Telafar) districts⁷⁵⁵ and multiple targets in the Mosul area, including civilians,⁷⁵⁶ a local *mukhtar*,⁷⁵⁷ and a member of the Tribal Mobilization Forces.⁷⁵⁸ Family disputes were believed to have been behind the killing of two young shepherds in Sinjar district in February 2023⁷⁵⁹ and a deadly shooting in a local government building in Akre (Aqra) district in February 2024.⁷⁶⁰

⁷³⁹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 52

⁷⁴⁰ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁴¹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 49

⁷⁴² ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, February 1, 2023, 1 February 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁴³ EPIC, ISHM: April 27 – May 4, 2023, 4 May 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁴ NINA, A civilian injured by the explosion of a device left behind by ISIS terrorists in the right side of Mosul, 25 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁵ NINA, A shepherd killed and another one wounded when an explosive device left by ISIS exploded west of Mosul, 9 May 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁶ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 19; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 24

⁷⁴⁷ Kurdistan24, Peshmerga, Iraqi forces conduct joint operation in Nineveh, 4 May 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁸ EPIC, ISHM: March 16 – 30, 2023, 30 March 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁹ EPIC, ISHM: May 11 – 18, 2023, 18 May 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁰ Iraq Protection Cluster, Crisis Information Report (Al Adla Village, Hamdaniyah district, Ninewa governorate), last updated 19 January 2017, [url](#), p. 1

⁷⁵¹ EPIC, ISHM: May 4 – 11, 2023, 11 May 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁵² Diyaruna, ISIS remnants on back foot in former northern Iraq stronghold, 11 July 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁵³ INA, A joint force launch a large-scale security operation in western Nineveh, 7 April 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁴ KirkukNow, Sinjar: Four people killed in 10 days for “unknown motives”, 6 November 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: March 16 – 30, 2023, 30 March 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁵ NINA, A Civilian Killed In An Armed Attack West Of Mosul, 18 October 2023; NINA, The body of a fifty-year-old civilian found in Tal Afar district, west of Mosul, 16 October 2023

⁷⁵⁶ NINA, Two civilians seriously injured by unidentified gunmen's bullets northwest of Mosul, 17 January 2024, [url](#); NINA, A civilian was seriously injured by unidentified gunmen's bullets south of Mosul, 15 November 2023

⁷⁵⁷ EPIC, ISHM: November 16 – 30, 2023, 30 November 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁸ EPIC, ISHM: December 28, 2023 – January 4, 2024, 4 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁹ KirkukNow, Shingal (Sinjar): Seven people killed in three days, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁶⁰ Shafaq News, Woman shoots a man in a government building in Duhok after a family dispute, 26 February 2024, [url](#)

According to a representative of the human rights organisation Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT) quoted by the Rudaw news website, Turkish forces conducted 36 attacks in Ninewa in 2023.⁷⁶¹ Turkish airstrikes resulted in the deaths of several rural residents in Akre (Aqra),⁷⁶² while a number of individuals died in Turkish air/drone operations targeting Kurdish *Asayish* and PKK-linked groups in Sinjar, including the 80th PMF Brigade⁷⁶³ and YBS.⁷⁶⁴

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 271 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Ninewa governorate, of which 27 were coded as battles, 210 explosions/remote violence, and 34 incidents of violence against civilians.⁷⁶⁵ Security incidents were recorded in all governorate districts, with the highest number (over 50 % of the total number of security incidents recorded) being documented in Aqra district (see Figure 20). According to ACLED data, Turkish forces and PKK were involved in the majority of events coded as battles and explosions/remote violence, while unidentified armed groups were mainly involved in incidents coded as violence against civilians.

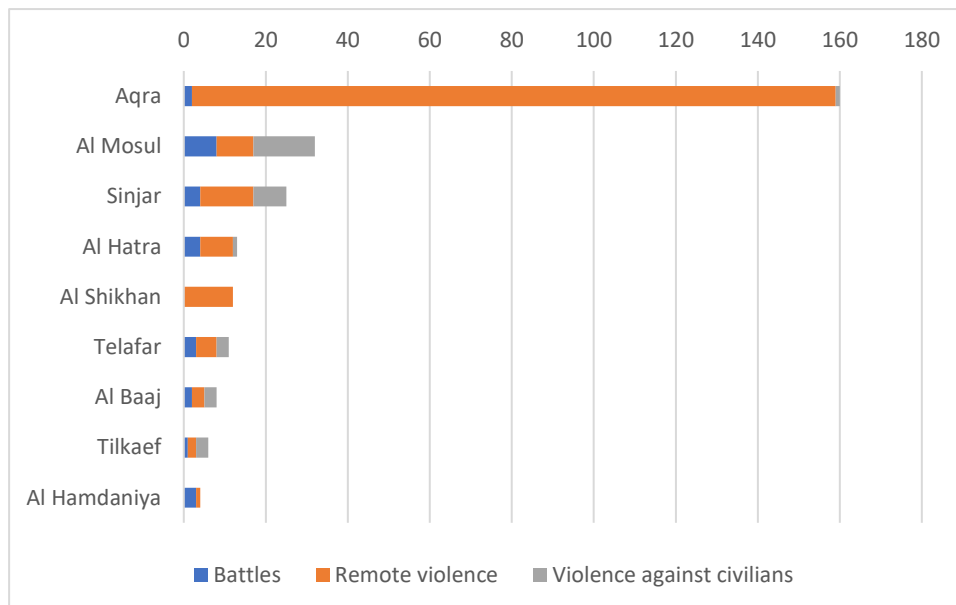


Figure 20. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Ninewa governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.⁷⁶⁶

⁷⁶¹ Rudaw, Turkey attacked Kurdistan Region, Iraq over 1,500 times in 2023: Monitor, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁶² Rudaw, Turkish warplane kills two villagers in Duhok: Sources, 20 February 2024, [url](#); Shafaq News, One person killed in Turkish bombing east of Duhok, 20 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁶³ KirkukNow, Shingal (Sinjar): Seven people killed in three days, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁶⁴ Reuters, Turkish drone kills three YBS fighters in Iraq - Kurdish authorities, 23 May 2023, [url](#); KirkukNow, Shingal (Sinjar): Seven people killed in three days, 3 March 2023, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁷⁶⁵ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

⁷⁶⁶ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 18 events leading to fatalities in Ninewa governorate.⁷⁶⁷

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 33 civilian casualties in Ninewa governorate.⁷⁶⁸ For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 2 civilian deaths in Ninewa governorate.⁷⁶⁹

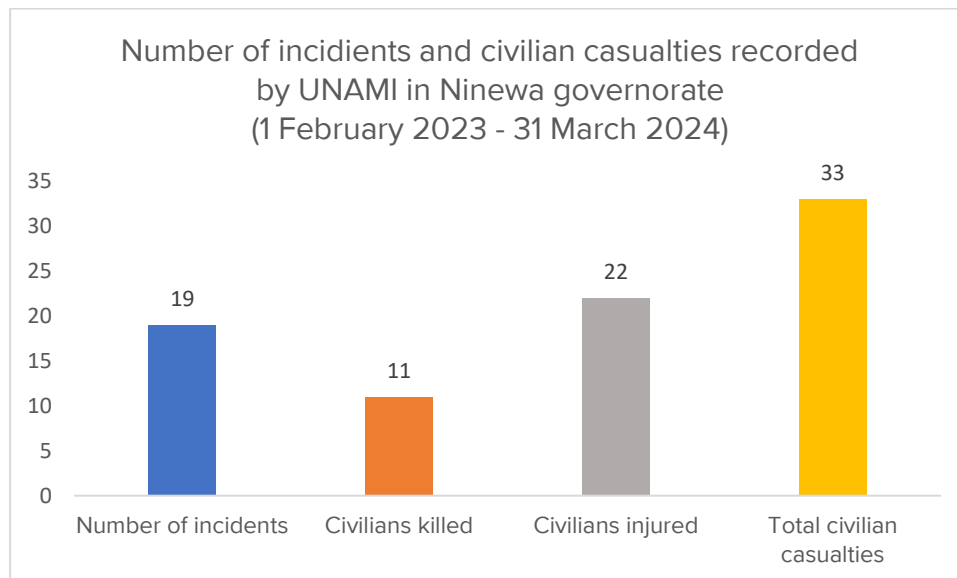


Figure 21. Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI in Ninewa governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.⁷⁷⁰

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

No information on new conflict-related infrastructure damage occurring in the reference period could be found within the time constraints of this report. Recovery and reconstruction efforts have started in Ninewa, but SIPRI noted that there was ‘still a long way to go’.⁷⁷¹ The Norwegian Refugee Council reported in May 2022 that there was still ‘widespread destruction of civilian houses’ in the town of Sinjar.⁷⁷² As of the end of 2022, the Mine Action Review estimated that 21 224 square metres of the governorate’s area were still cluster munition-

⁷⁶⁷ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

⁷⁶⁸ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

⁷⁶⁹ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

⁷⁷⁰ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

⁷⁷¹ SIPRI, Climate change and post-conflict reconstruction in the Nineveh Plains of Iraq [Blog], 8 February 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁷² NRC, Iraq: Conflict, destruction stopping displaced families from returning to Sinjar, 18 May 2022, [url](#)

contaminated.⁷⁷³ Several civilians were injured in explosions of old IEDs, including in west Mosul,⁷⁷⁴ Al-Hatra,⁷⁷⁵ and Tel Afar (Telafar) districts.⁷⁷⁶

Conflict-induced displacement and return

No information could be found on new conflict-induced displacements occurring in Ninewa during the reference period. However, several thousand people were displaced from Sinjar and its surroundings in early May 2022 following fighting between the Iraqi Army and YBS, a PKK-linked predominantly Yazidi militia group.⁷⁷⁷ IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)⁷⁷⁸ statistics as of December 2023 estimate the number of IDPs originating from Ninewa to be 627 719, the highest among all governorates.⁷⁷⁹

As of December 2023, 1 960 734 individuals have returned to Ninewa. The majority of returnees were recorded in Mosul (Al-Mosul) district.⁷⁸⁰ The reference period saw some villages in the Hassan Sham area being reopened for returnees.⁷⁸¹ Authorities in Dohuk governorate recorded some 4 000 IDP returns from Dohuk to Sinjar between January and early August 2023,⁷⁸² explaining that declining international humanitarian assistance had led to a deterioration of the situation of IDPs in camps in Dohuk.⁷⁸³ Between late September 2023 and January 2024, 4 382 IDPs returned from areas of Dohuk and Ninewa governorates to Ninewa's Ba'aj and Sinjar districts, as reported by the UN Secretary-General.⁷⁸⁴ At the same time, stakeholders interviewed by Human Rights Watch cited the volatile security situation, a lack of state compensation for destroyed homes and businesses, and a dearth of adequate public services as obstacles to returns to Sinjar.⁷⁸⁵

⁷⁷³ Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 61

⁷⁷⁴ EPIC, ISHM: February 2 – 9, 2023, 9 February 2023, [url](#); NINA, A child killed when an explosive device left by ISIS exploded in west Mosul, 28 October 2023

⁷⁷⁵ EPIC, ISHM: April 6 – 13, 2023, 13 April 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: March 30 – April 6, 2023, 6 April 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁶ EPIC, ISHM: April 27 – May 4, 2023, 4 May 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁷ Al Jazeera, Estimated 3,000 people flee armed clashes in northern Iraq, 2 May 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁸ Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁷⁷⁹ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁰ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁸¹ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 70

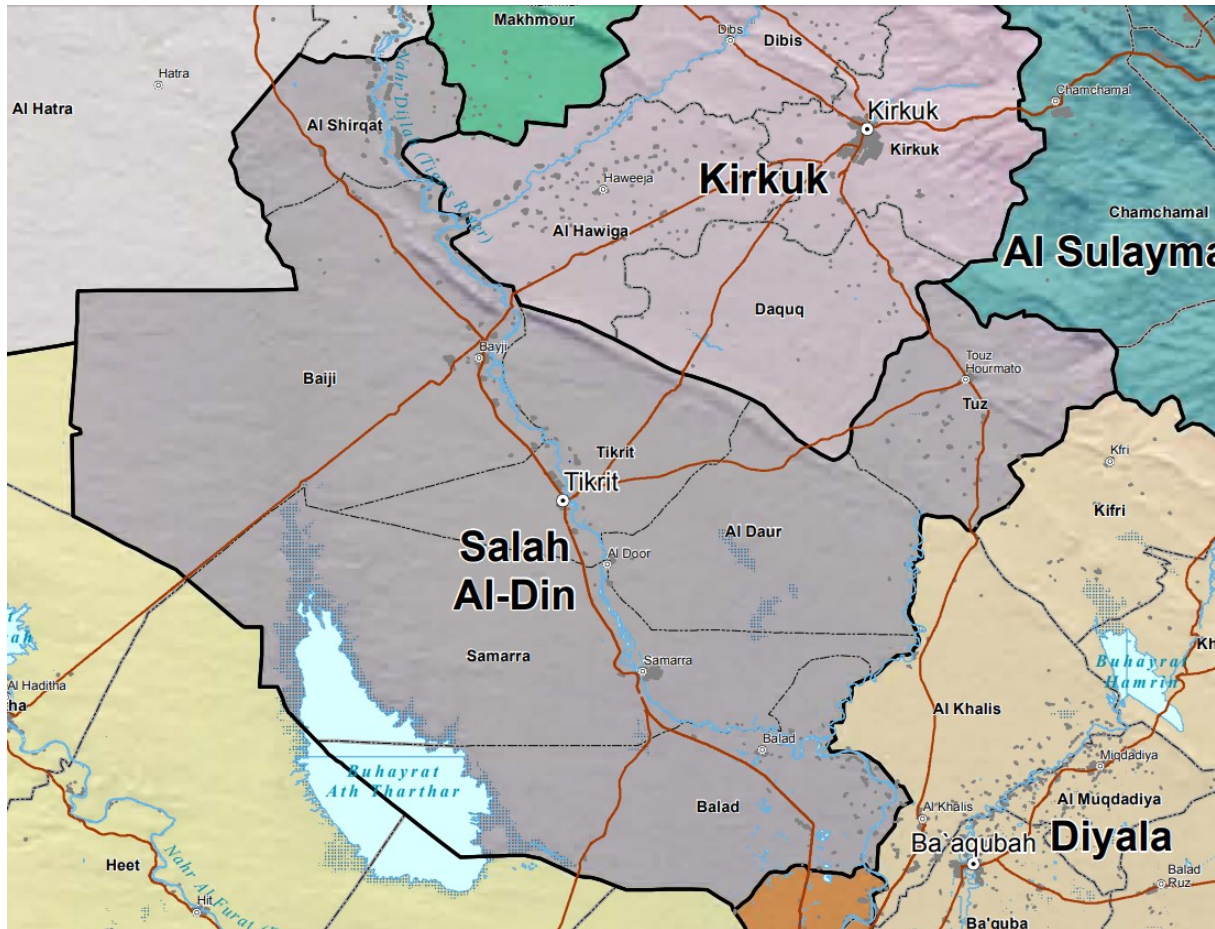
⁷⁸² EPIC, ISHM: July 27 – August 10, 2023, 10 August 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁸³ Shafaq News, 600 displaced families in Duhok seek return amid aid reduction, 21 May 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁴ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 70

⁷⁸⁵ HRW, Iraq: Political Infighting Blocking Reconstruction of Sinjar, 6 June 2023, [url](#)

2.7. Salah Al-Din



Map 8: Salah Al-Din governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.⁷⁸⁶

General description of governorate

Salah Al-Din (Salah Ad-Din, Saladin, Salahaddin, Salahuddin) governorate is located in north-central Iraq and shares internal borders with Baghdad, Diyala, Sulaymaniyah, Kirkuk, Erbil, Anbar, and Ninewa governorates. Its capital is Tikrit.⁷⁸⁷ The governorate comprises the following districts: Tikrit, Al-Shirqat, Baiji (Beygee), Samarra, Balad, Al-Daur, Tuz Khurmato, Thethar, and Fares.⁷⁸⁸ The status of Tuz Khurmato district is disputed between the KRG and the central government.⁷⁸⁹

The governorate's population in 2022 was estimated at 1 767 837.⁷⁹⁰ The governorate is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arabs,⁷⁹¹ although it also comprises Shia Arab, Kurdish, and

⁷⁸⁶ UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁷ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Salah Al-Din Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁸ UNOCHA, Iraq: Salah Al-Din Governorate Profile and Humanitarian Response, December 2020, [url](#), pp. 1-2

⁷⁸⁹ UNHCR Iraq, Iraq: Kurdistan Region and Northern Governorates [Map], 22 January 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁰ Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8

⁷⁹¹ Saleem, Z.A., The King of Salah al-Din: The Power of Iraq's Sunni Elites, LSE, January 2021, [url](#), p. 5

Shia Turkmen communities,⁷⁹² with Shiites constituting the majority in the towns of Balad and Dujail.⁷⁹³

For further information on the governorate's ethno-religious composition, please refer to section 2.7.1 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Armed actors' presence and control

For information on the governorate's conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to sections 2.7.2 and 2.7.3 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Salah Al-Din governorate, like Ninewa and Anbar, is under the control of the Iraqi Army.⁷⁹⁴ The Salah Al-Din Operations Command is headquartered in Tikrit, while the city of Samarra hosts the headquarters of the Samarra Operations Command.⁷⁹⁵ Each of these commands had its own security sectors within the governorate (e.g., Wadi Al-Tharthar falls under the Salah Al-Din Operations Command⁷⁹⁶ while the Samarra area is under the Samarra Operations Command⁷⁹⁷). In February 2023, Prime Minister Al-Sudani established the new 21st Division of the Iraqi Army, which was to be deployed in Salah Al-Din.⁷⁹⁸ As of February 2024, the 1st Regiment of the 21st Division's 91st Brigade was stationed on the strategic Wadi Al-Tharthar line stretching from the Salah Al-Din desert into Al-Hatra in Ninewa. A number of military units and checkpoints have been set up along this line, which used to be known as a 'safe corridor' for insurgent infiltration.⁷⁹⁹

PMF units operating in the governorate included forces of the Kirkuk and East Tigris Operations Command,⁸⁰⁰ including PMF's 9th, 22nd, and 88th Brigades.⁸⁰¹ Special forces of the Sadr-affiliated⁸⁰² Saraya Al-Salam militia's 313th Brigade (part of the Samarra Operations Command) were involved in anti-ISIL activity.⁸⁰³ KH and the ISF's CTS forces were both present at Camp Speicher, a strategic outpost in the vicinity of Tikrit.⁸⁰⁴ In September 2023, the Ministry of Interior announced the imminent complete transfer of Salah Al-Din's security

⁷⁹² Skelton, M. and Saleem, Z.A., Displacement and Iraq's Political Marketplace: Addressing Political Barriers to IDP Return, IRIS, February 2021, [url](#), p. 46

⁷⁹³ Al-Shammari, I., An Independent Federal State for Sunnis in Iraq, CFRI, 14 February 2024, [url](#); Newlines Institute for Strategy and Policy, Intelligence Briefing: A Thousand Hezbollah's – Iraq's Emerging Militia State, May 2021, [url](#), p. 48

⁷⁹⁴ New Arab (The), Transfer of security responsibilities from Iraq's army to local police stalled by challenges, 18 September 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁵ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 19

⁷⁹⁶ Shafaq News, Military surprise operation eliminates "terrorist cell" in Saladin, 12 November 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁷ Shafaq News, Iraqi Security Forces Repel Terrorist Attack in Samarra, Killing 3 Attackers, 11 May 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁸ INA, The Commander-in-Chief agrees to form the 21st Division in Salah al-Din, 24 February 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁹ INA, PM: An end is deserved to the existence of the international coalition in Iraq, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁰ QNA, Iraqi Forces Launch Security Operation in Salah Al-Din to Pursue ISIS Members, 15 January 2024, [url](#); Asharq Al-Awsat, Iraq Announces Arrest of ISIS Leader, 26 September 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁰¹ Shafaq News, PMF "neutralize" ISIS gathering in Saladin, 24 September 2023, [url](#); Iraqi News, PMF launches large security operation in Salah Al-Din, 10 April 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁰² Rudaw, Suspected clashes between rival Shiite factions erupt in Basra, 1 September 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁰³ Shafaq News, Saraya Al-Salam Brigades capture ISIS operative in Saladin, 31 December 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁴ Al-Kaabi, A. and Knights, M., Kataib Hezbollah's Escalating Feud with the Iraqi Security Forces, TWI, 19 May 2023, [url](#)

file from the army to the local police, although it remained unclear whether this also implied a withdrawal of PMF factions.⁸⁰⁵

ISIL maintained its presence in Salah Al-Din⁸⁰⁶ where it operated in small, decentralised cells.⁸⁰⁷ The group's supply lines ran through mountainous areas of Salah Al-Din that were difficult to access and patrol for the security forces. The group retained its ability to move freely⁸⁰⁸ and operate in and around the disputed areas.⁸⁰⁹ As of mid-2023, most leaders of the Iraqi branch of ISIL were reportedly present in the Hamrin Mountains.⁸¹⁰ Eastern sections of the governorate, especially the Al-Aith area, constituted 'hotspots' for ISIL due to their rough and extensive terrain and proximity to the unstable borders of Kirkuk and parts of Diyala.⁸¹¹ In spring 2023, ISIL set up 'outposts' north of Tooz Khurmato and moved unconfirmed numbers of fighters from Khanaqin (Diyala) to the Tooz Khurmato-Kifri area.⁸¹²

Recent security trends

Salah Al-Din was one of the governorates that witnessed a concentration of ISIL operations⁸¹³ as the group sustained a 'low-grade insurgency' across the disputed areas.⁸¹⁴ The Hamrin Mountains were among ISIL's key zones of operation due to gaps in the presence of Iraqi and KRG forces.⁸¹⁵ The group's attacks were of an asymmetrical nature,⁸¹⁶ as it conducted most of its operations through the use of light weaponry and explosives,⁸¹⁷ including simple IEDs, targeted assassinations, small-arms ambushes.⁸¹⁸ Attacks attributed to ISIL included a thwarted suicide attack on the PMF security directorate offices in Tikrit⁸¹⁹ and further attacks on PMF,⁸²⁰

⁸⁰⁵ New Arab (The), Transfer of security responsibilities from Iraq's army to local police stalled by challenges, 18 September 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁶ UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, [url](#), para. 32

⁸⁰⁷ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 49

⁸⁰⁸ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁹ Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen ambtsbericht Irak [Country report Iraq], November 2023, [url](#), p. 16

⁸¹⁰ UN Security Council, Letter dated 24 July 2023 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2023/549, 25 July 2023, [url](#), para. 50

⁸¹¹ Shafaq News, PMF "neutralize" ISIS gathering in Saladin, 24 September 2023, [url](#)

⁸¹² ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, [url](#)

⁸¹³ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 49; USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 16

⁸¹⁴ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, [url](#)

⁸¹⁵ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 49

⁸¹⁶ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 19

⁸¹⁷ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url](#), para. 49

⁸¹⁸ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, January 1, 2023 – March 31, 2023, 2 May 2023, [url](#), p. 10

⁸¹⁹ EPIC, ISHM: January 18 – January 25, 2024, 25 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸²⁰ EPIC, ISHM: January 4 – 11, 2024, 11 January 2024, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#)

Iraqi Army soldiers⁸²¹ and federal police⁸²² in various areas of the governorate, including the Jazeera sector,⁸²³ the Al-Zarga area (eastern Salah Al-Din),⁸²⁴ and the Al-Qadiriya area north of Samarra.⁸²⁵ Moreover, ISIL kidnapped several animal herders,⁸²⁶ including in the Tooz Khurmato district,⁸²⁷ killing at least one abductee.⁸²⁸

In response to ISIL activity, the ISF continued to carry out anti-terrorism operations,⁸²⁹ including airstrikes on ISIL hideouts in Tooz Khurmato district,⁸³⁰ in the Salah Al-Din – Kirkuk border zone⁸³¹ and in the Al-Aith area.⁸³² The ISF also conducted a number of anti-ISIL ground security operations, including in the Wadi Al-Tharthar region⁸³³ and in the Al-Aith Island area.⁸³⁴

Further instances of armed clashes were reported between KH fighters and members of the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) at Camp Speicher in March 2023⁸³⁵ and in a tribal conflict that broke out in Dujail in southern Salah Al-Din in May 2023 and left three people dead, including a police colonel a PMF member, and two civilians injured.⁸³⁶

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 71 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Salah Al-Din governorate, of which 29 were coded as battles, 33 explosions/remote violence, and 9 incidents of violence against civilians.⁸³⁷ Security incidents were recorded in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in Tikrit and Tooz Khurmato districts (see Figure 22). According to ACLED data, ISF and affiliated armed groups and ISIL were involved in the majority of events coded as battles and explosions/remote violence, while unidentified armed groups were mainly involved in incidents coded as violence against civilians.

⁸²¹ Shafaq News, Three Iraqi soldiers killed in an ISIS in Saladin: source, 14 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸²² EPIC, ISHM: August 24 – 31, 2023, 31 August 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, Iraqi Security Forces Repel Terrorist Attack in Samarra, Killing 3 Attackers, 11 May 2023, [url](#)

⁸²³ Shafaq News, Three Iraqi soldiers killed in an ISIS in Saladin: source, 14 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸²⁴ EPIC, ISHM: January 4 – 11, 2024, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸²⁵ EPIC, ISHM: August 24 – 31, 2023, 31 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸²⁶ EPIC, ISHM: January 4 – 11, 2024, 11 January 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: March 9 – 16, 2023, 16 March 2023, [url](#)

⁸²⁷ EPIC, ISHM: January 4 – 11, 2024, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸²⁸ EPIC, ISHM: March 9 – 16, 2023, 16 March 2023, [url](#)

⁸²⁹ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 19; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 24

⁸³⁰ Iraqi News, Iraqi Air Force destroys ISIS hideout in Salah Al-Din, 30 November 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, Iraqi Joint Operations Command executes airstrike on ISIS sites in Saladin, 30 November 2023, [url](#)

⁸³¹ EPIC, ISHM: September 14 – 21, 2023, 21 September 2023, [url](#); Kurdistan24, Iraqi F-16 kills suspected ISIS unit in Saladin, says military, 18 September 2023, [url](#)

⁸³² Rudaw, Iraqi warplanes kill 3 suspected ISIS militants in Salahaddin, 30 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸³³ Shafaq News, Military surprise operation eliminates "terrorist cell" in Saladin, 12 November 2023, [url](#)

⁸³⁴ QNA, Iraqi Forces Launch Security Operation in Salah Al-Din to Pursue ISIS Members, 15 January 2024, [url](#); Asharq Al-Awsat, Iraq Announces Arrest of ISIS Leader, 26 September 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, PMF "neutralize" ISIS gathering in Saladin, 24 September 2023, [url](#)

⁸³⁵ Al-Kaabi, A. and Knights, M., Kataib Hezbollah's Escalating Feud with the Iraqi Security Forces, TWI, 19 May 2023, [url](#)

⁸³⁶ EPIC, ISHM: April 27 – May 4, 2023, 4 May 2023, [url](#)

⁸³⁷ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

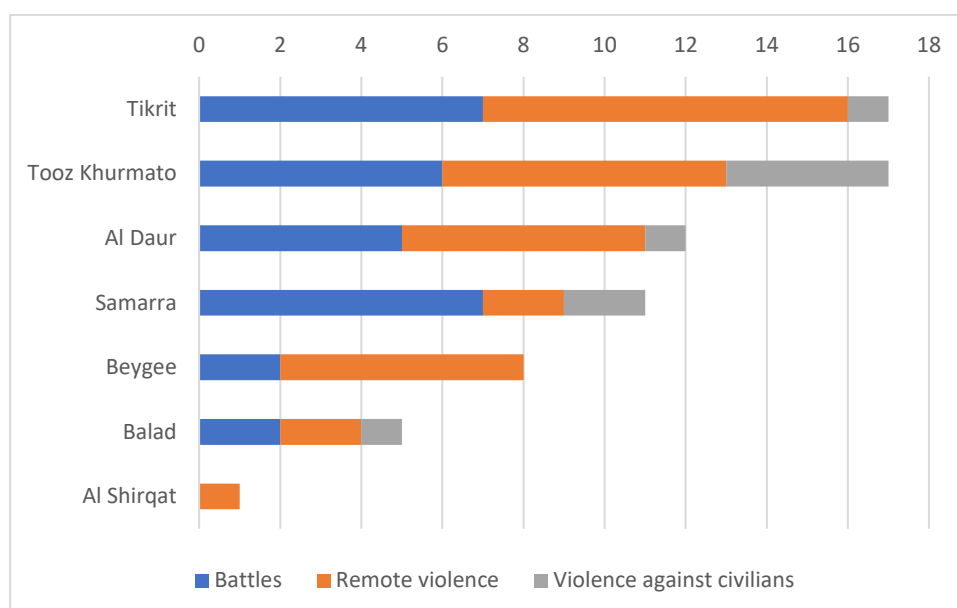


Figure 22. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Salah Al-Din governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.⁸³⁸

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 9 events leading to fatalities in Salah Al-Din governorate.⁸³⁹

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 10 civilian casualties in Salah Al-Din governorate.⁸⁴⁰ For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 3 civilian deaths in Salah Al-Din governorate.⁸⁴¹

⁸³⁸ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

⁸³⁹ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

⁸⁴⁰ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

⁸⁴¹ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

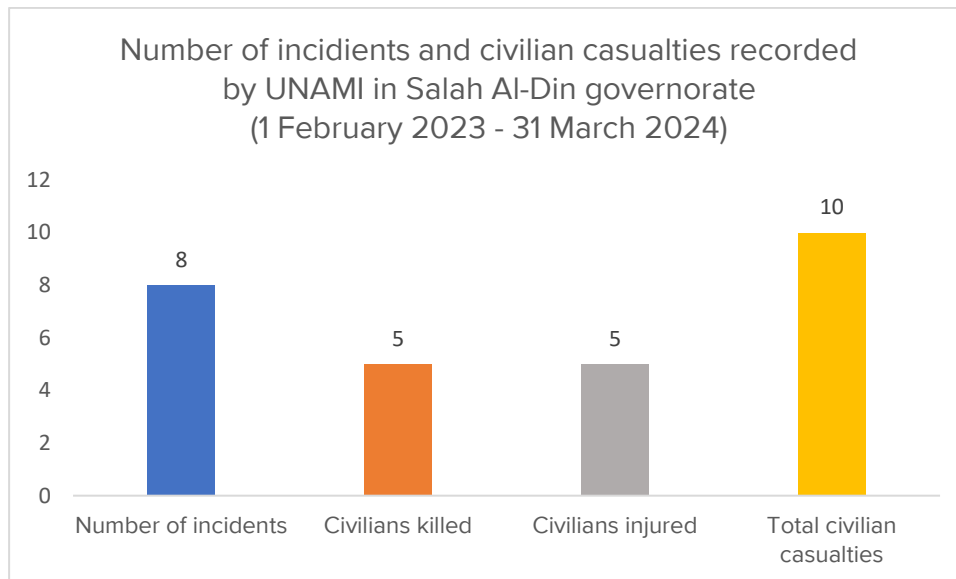


Figure 23. Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI in Salah Al-Din governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.⁸⁴²

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

Information on new conflict-related infrastructure damage occurring in the reference period could not be found within the time constraints of this report. As of the end of 2022, the Mine Action Review did not report any cluster munition-contaminated areas in Salah Al-Din governorate.⁸⁴³ During the reference period, several people were killed or injured in explosions of old IEDs, including in Baiji (Beygee) district⁸⁴⁴ and in the Al-Aith region.⁸⁴⁵

Conflict-induced displacement and return

No information could be found on new conflict-induced displacements occurring in Salah Al-Din during the reference period. IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)⁸⁴⁶ statistics as of December 2023 estimate the number of IDPs originating from Salah Al-Din to be 128 273.⁸⁴⁷

As of December 2023, 760 284 individuals have returned to Salah Al-Din. The majority of returnees were recorded in Tikrit district.⁸⁴⁸ In November 2023, scores of displaced people from camps in Sulaymaniyah⁸⁴⁹ and Dohuk⁸⁵⁰ governorates returned to their former areas of

⁸⁴² EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

⁸⁴³ Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 61

⁸⁴⁴ EPIC, ISHM: June 15 – 22, 2023, 22 June 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁴⁵ EPIC, ISHM: September 14 – 21, 2023, 21 September 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁴⁶ Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁸⁴⁷ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁴⁸ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁴⁹ INA, 127 IDPs return to Salah al-Din and Nineveh: MDM, 21 November 2023, [url](#); INA, 111 IDPs return from Sulaymaniyah to their homes in Salah al-Din: Jabro, 15 November 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁵⁰ INA, 127 IDPs return to Salah al-Din and Nineveh: MDM, 21 November 2023, [url](#)

residence in Yathrib in Balad district. Information on the reasons for returns could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

2.8. Dohuk



Map 9: Dohuk governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.⁸⁵¹

General description of governorate

Dohuk (Dahuk, Duhok, Dihok) governorate is located in the far north of Iraq⁸⁵² and in the north-western part of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).⁸⁵³ It has internal borders with the governorates of Ninewa and Erbil and shares international borders with Türkiye and Syria. The governorate comprises the following districts: Dohuk, Amedi (Al-Amadiya), Sumel (Sumail), and Zakho.⁸⁵⁴ Akre (Aqra)⁸⁵⁵ and some areas of Al-Shikhan and Semel districts,⁸⁵⁶ though officially part of Ninewa governorate, are de facto governed by the KRG as part of Dohuk governorate.⁸⁵⁷ The governorate's capital is Dohuk city.⁸⁵⁸

⁸⁵¹ UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, [url](#)

⁸⁵² UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Dohuk Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

⁸⁵³ UNHCR Iraq, Iraq: Kurdistan Region and Northern Governorates [Map], 22 January 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁵⁴ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Dohuk Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

⁸⁵⁵ AGO, Household Assessments and Focus Group Discussions: Akre, Kurdistan Region of Iraq – March-April 2023, 23 June 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁸⁵⁶ Iraq, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Population Analysis Report February 2021, 30 May 2022, [url](#), p. 11, footnote 3

⁸⁵⁷ AGO, Household Assessments and Focus Group Discussions: Akre, Kurdistan Region of Iraq – March-April 2023, 23 June 2023, [url](#), p. 3; Iraq, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Population Analysis Report February 2021, 30 May 2022, [url](#), p. 11, footnote 3

⁸⁵⁸ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Dohuk Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

The governorate's population in 2022 was estimated at 1 432 369.⁸⁵⁹ Its residents are mainly Kurdish,⁸⁶⁰ but the governorate is also home to communities of Arabs,⁸⁶¹ Turkmen, Chaldeans, and Assyrians.⁸⁶²

For further information on the governorate's ethno-religious composition as well as its economy, please refer to section 2.8.1 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Armed actors' presence and control

For information on the governorate's conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to sections 2.8.2 and 2.8.3 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Dohuk governorate is controlled by the KDP, to which Peshmerga and security forces are affiliated.⁸⁶³ Besides KDP Peshmerga forces,⁸⁶⁴ there was a continued presence of KDP-controlled⁸⁶⁵ Zeravani units, a militarised police force under the command of the KRG's Ministry of Interior,⁸⁶⁶ and forces of the Duhok Security Directorate (*Asayish*).⁸⁶⁷

The presence of Peshmerga forces has been reinforced in recent years to secure the border zones where fighting between Turkish forces and PKK occurs regularly.⁸⁶⁸ These areas have also seen an increase in the number of military bases of Iraqi border guards.⁸⁶⁹ The presence of the 1st Brigade of the border guards was reported in Zakho district⁸⁷⁰ and, since February 2024, on the Iraq-Türkiye border strip in Shiladze subdistrict (Amedy district).⁸⁷¹

Turkish forces have significantly increased their military presence in the KRI in recent years⁸⁷² and were setting up new bases in Dohuk governorate during the reference period.⁸⁷³ Most

⁸⁵⁹ Iraq, CSO, الباب الثاني 2022-2023 المجموعة الإحصائية [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8

⁸⁶⁰ AUK, Life in Dohuk, n.d., [url](#)

⁸⁶¹ Balanche, F., Iraq and Syria: Kurdish Autonomous Regions Under Threat, Groupe d'Etudes Géopolitiques, 4 March 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁶² Shafaq News, Minister: Most Christians and Turkmen in KRI reside in Erbil and Duhok, 9 December 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁶³ Rodgers, W., Iraqi Kurdistan's House of Cards Is Collapsing, FP, 22 March 2023, [url](#); Norway, Landinfo, Iran: Iransk-kurdiske partier med baser i Nord-Irak – Endret situasjon høsten 2023 [Iranian-Kurdish parties with bases in northern Iraq – changed situation in autumn 2023], 4 December 2023, [url](#), p. 3, footnote 5

⁸⁶⁴ ACLED, Regional Overview Middle East – September 2023, 5 October 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁵ Bakr, M.J., The War at Home - The Need for Internal Security Sector Reform in Iraqi Kurdistan, MEI, July 2021, [url](#), pp. 9-10

⁸⁶⁶ Rudaw, KRG, PKK exchange blame for clashes at Duhok checkpoint, 25 January 2024, [url](#); Shafaq News, Death of Zeravani forces member due to electric shock near Mosul, 23 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁷ basnews, Security Forces Arrest Two Drug Dealers in Duhok, 21 February 2024, [url](#); KirkukNow, Dohuk Asayish Refuses to Disclose Case of Journalist Suleiman Ahmed - Lawyers Consider Federal Court, 26 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁸ Kurdistan24, PKK militants target Peshmerga forces in Duhok province, 12 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁹ Rudaw, Iraqi border guards deployed to northern Duhok, 23 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁰ Shafaq News, CTG: Booby-Trapped Drone Targets Border Guards Headquarters in Kurdistan Region, 5 July 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁷¹ Rudaw, Iraqi border guards deployed to northern Duhok, 23 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁷² ANF, Turkish state establishes a new base in Duhok, 21 January 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Turkey's push into Iraq risks deeper conflict, 31 January 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁷³ ANF, Turkish state establishes a new base in Duhok, 21 January 2024, [url](#); Shafaq News, Turkish artillery strikes on PKK targets near Duhok raise concerns, 4 October 2023, [url](#)

Turkish bases were located in a 150 km-long strip of Iraqi-Turkish borderland that reached 30 km deep into Iraqi territory.⁸⁷⁴

The PKK's leadership maintained a foothold in northern Iraq⁸⁷⁵ and the group operated bases in Dohuk governorate.⁸⁷⁶ With the KDP reportedly lacking the military strength to contain the PKK on its own,⁸⁷⁷ the governorate witnessed a concentration of Turkish operations⁸⁷⁸ that involved shelling of PKK positions.⁸⁷⁹ Its rural mountain areas have been a traditional core zone of operations of the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT).⁸⁸⁰ Meanwhile, ISIL maintained only a 'very limited' presence in the KRI.⁸⁸¹

Recent security trends

Turkish armed forces conducted ground and air operations against PKK targets in Dohuk throughout the reference period.⁸⁸² According to a representative of the human rights organisation Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT) quoted by the Rudaw news website, Türkiye conducted 517 strikes in Dohuk in 2023.⁸⁸³ Turkish forces reportedly launched multiple airstrikes in the Metin and Gara mountains⁸⁸⁴ of Amedy district.⁸⁸⁵ Meanwhile, various unspecified armed groups continued to conduct attacks against security forces and foreign military bases.⁸⁸⁶ Following Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's re-election in late May 2023, PKK operations, including IED attacks on Turkish forces, increased in the governorate. In June 2023, the group revoked a unilateral ceasefire it had declared in February, citing continuing Turkish anti-PKK operations.⁸⁸⁷ The border areas of Dohuk regularly witnessed clashes,⁸⁸⁸ with the Metin area becoming a 'focal point' of fighting between Turkish forces stationed there and PKK militants⁸⁸⁹ who operated tunnels and caves in the mountain.⁸⁹⁰

⁸⁷⁴ Reuters, Turkey's push into Iraq risks deeper conflict, 31 January 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁵ AP, Turkey strikes Kurdish militants in Iraq again after warning of retaliation for a bombing in Ankara, 4 October 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁶ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, January 1, 2023 – March 31, 2023, 2 May 2023, [url](#), p. 32

⁸⁷⁷ Reuters, Turkey's push into Iraq risks deeper conflict, 31 January 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁸ ACLED, Regional Overview Middle East – June 2023, 6 July 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁹ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, January 1, 2023 – March 31, 2023, 2 May 2023, [url](#), p. 32

⁸⁸⁰ ACLED, Regional Overview Middle East – June 2023, 6 July 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁸¹ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, January 1, 2023 – March 31, 2023, 2 May 2023, [url](#), p. 32

⁸⁸² UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 32; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 26; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 18

⁸⁸³ Rudaw, Turkey attacked Kurdistan Region, Iraq over 1,500 times in 2023: Monitor, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁴ AP, Turkey launches airstrikes against Kurdish militants in Iraq and Syria after 9 soldiers were killed, 13 January 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Turkey says PKK targets in north Iraq destroyed after Ankara suicide attack, 2 October 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, Turkey claims hitting over 30 PKK targets in Kurdistan Region, 16 September 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, No casualties in 'intense' bombing of Duhok mountains, Turkey blamed, 3 June 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁵ Rudaw, No casualties in 'intense' bombing of Duhok mountains, Turkey blamed, 3 June 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁶ Shafaq News, CTG: Booby-Trapped Drone Targets Border Guards Headquarters in Kurdistan Region, 5 July 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁷ ACLED, Regional Overview Middle East – June 2023, 6 July 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁸ Kurdistan24, Two artillery shells struck village near Amedi, 21 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁹ Shafaq News, Turkish air force strikes PKK near Duhok, 1 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁰ Shafaq News, Turkish Warplanes Conduct Airstrikes on PKK Positions in Northern Iraq's Kurdistan Region, 6 May 2023, [url](#)

In May and early June 2023, Türkiye reportedly carried out more than 50 airstrikes in the space of three weeks on PKK sites in Amedy district (Mount Metin area, Deraluk sub-district).⁸⁹¹ Following a suicide attack in Ankara in early October 2023 for which the PKK claimed responsibility,⁸⁹² these areas experienced a further surge in Turkish airstrikes⁸⁹³ and artillery attacks.⁸⁹⁴ Turkish strikes escalated again in the aftermath of deadly PKK attacks on Turkish troops stationed in the KRI in December 2023 and January 2024,⁸⁹⁵ and intensified clashes were reported between Turkish forces and the PKK in Shiladze and Deraluk. Civilians were caught in the crossfire of this conflict⁸⁹⁶ as Turkish air and drone strikes left several civilians dead or injured,⁸⁹⁷ including in the Shiladze,⁸⁹⁸ Bamarne,⁸⁹⁹ and Jumanki areas⁹⁰⁰. There was also a reported assault on a Kurdish political figure by Turkish intelligence operatives.⁹⁰¹

There were reports of PKK carrying out several attacks on Peshmerga units in Amedy district by means of rocket fire,⁹⁰² armed assault,⁹⁰³ and a roadside IED.⁹⁰⁴ Moreover, in Zakho district, unidentified perpetrators carried out a drone attack on the 1st Brigade of the Iraqi border guards,⁹⁰⁵ while a car exploded due to unknown causes, killing a former KDP security official.⁹⁰⁶ KDP Peshmerga forces attacked PKK positions in September 2023 in what was reported as ‘a rare direct confrontation’ between the two entities.⁹⁰⁷

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 3 441 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Dohuk governorate, of which 622 were coded as battles, 2 816 explosions/remote violence and 3 incidents of violence against civilians.⁹⁰⁸ The vast majority of security incidents was documented in Al Amadiya district (see Figure 24).

⁸⁹¹ Shafaq News, Turkey bombs PKK sites in Duhok: +50 attacks in less than a month, 3 June 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁹² Al Jazeera, Turkey says PKK targets in north Iraq destroyed after Ankara suicide attack, 2 October 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁹³ Al Jazeera, Turkey says PKK targets in north Iraq destroyed after Ankara suicide attack, 2 October 2023, [url](#); AP, Turkey strikes Kurdish militants in Iraq again after warning of retaliation for a bombing in Ankara, 4 October 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁴ Shafaq News, Turkish artillery strikes on PKK targets near Duhok raise concerns, 4 October 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁵ CFR, Instability in Iraq, last updated 13 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁶ Rudaw, Iraqi border guards deployed to northern Duhok, 23 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁷ Reuters, Two civilians killed in Turkish air strike in northern Iraq, security sources say, 8 March 2024, [url](#); Rudaw, Turkish drone kills off-duty Peshmerga in Duhok, 5 December 2023, [url](#); USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, July 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023, 9 November 2023, [url](#), p. 52

⁸⁹⁸ Reuters, Two civilians killed in Turkish air strike in northern Iraq, security sources say, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁹ Rudaw, Turkish drone kills off-duty Peshmerga in Duhok, 5 December 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁰ NINA, One person killed and another one injured when a Turkish plane bombed a civilian vehicle in the Jumanki district of Dohuk, 6 August 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁰¹ Shafaq News, Kurdish organization denounces Turkish intelligence for targeting one of its members, 19 April 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁰² Rudaw, KRG, PKK exchange blame for clashes at Duhok checkpoint, 25 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰³ Shafaq News, PKK militants attack Peshmerga unit in KRI, 12 August 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁴ EPIC, ISHM: July 27 – August 10, 2023, 10 August 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁵ Shafaq News, CTG: Booby-Trapped Drone Targets Border Guards Headquarters in Kurdistan Region, 5 July 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁶ EPIC, ISHM: July 20 – 27, 2023, 27 July 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁷ ACLED, Regional Overview Middle East – September 2023, 5 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁸ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

According to ACLED data, Turkish forces and PKK were involved in the majority of events coded as battles and explosions/remote violence.

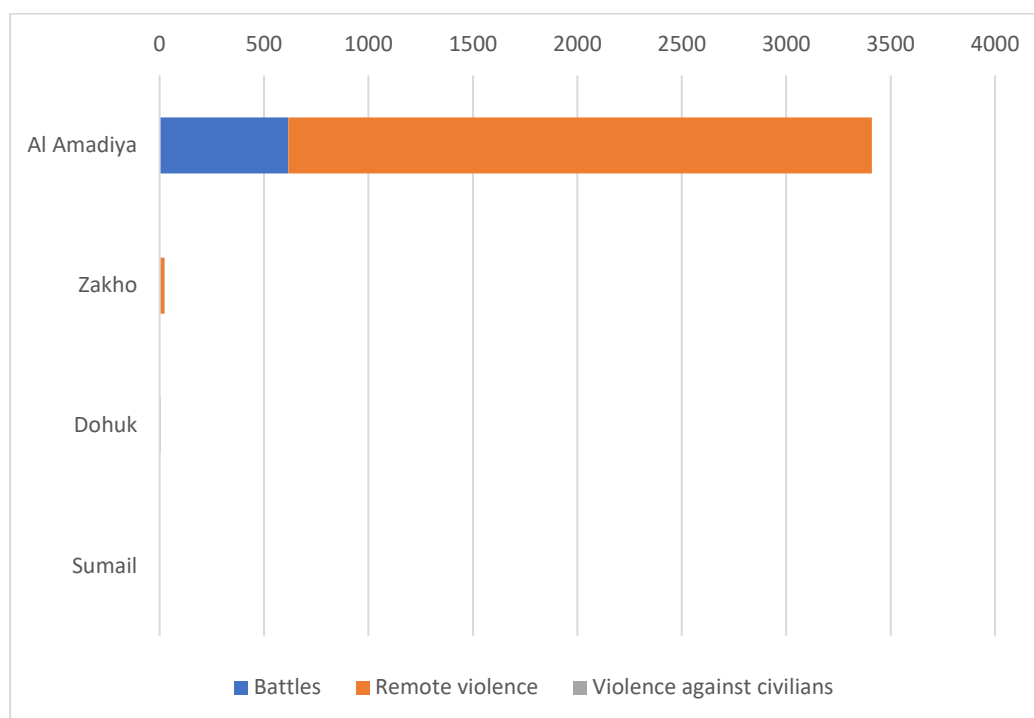


Figure 24. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Dohuk governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.⁹⁰⁹

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 76 events leading to fatalities in Dohuk governorate.⁹¹⁰

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 12 civilian casualties in Dohuk governorate.⁹¹¹ For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 2 civilian deaths in Dohuk governorate.⁹¹²

⁹⁰⁹ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

⁹¹⁰ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

⁹¹¹ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

⁹¹² EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

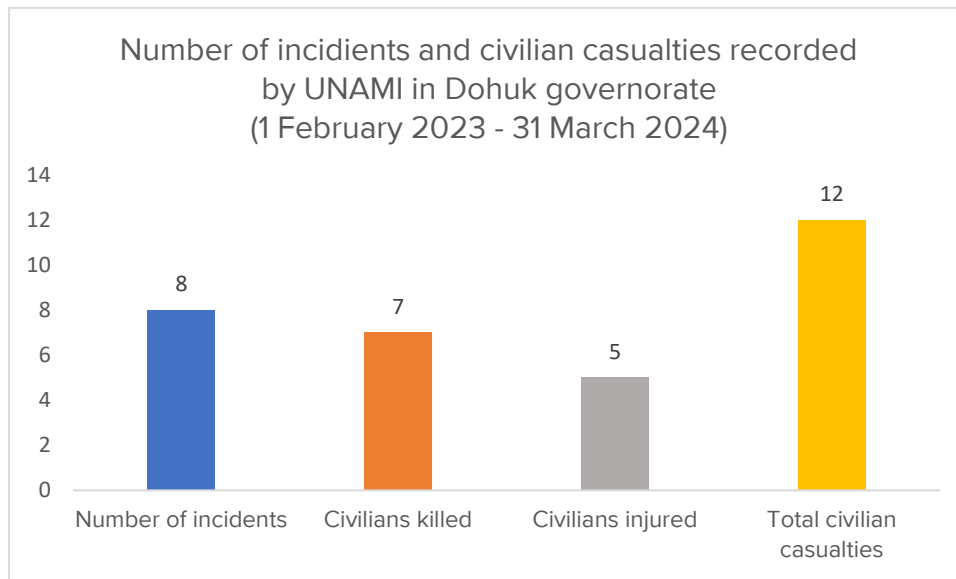


Figure 25. Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI in Dohuk governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.⁹¹³

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

According to the pro-Kurdish⁹¹⁴ Shafaq News website, there were 3 512 registered minefields in the KRI.⁹¹⁵ Data from the Iraqi Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) cited by Rudaw indicated that more than 200 square kilometres of the KRI's territory remained contaminated with landmines and remnants of war.⁹¹⁶ Explosive remnants of war in the KRI comprised items planted by the former Iraqi government's armed forces, by Iranian forces during the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988), as well as remnants of the Türkiye-PKK conflict.⁹¹⁷ As of the end of 2022, the Mine Action Review stated, with reference to the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA), that the KRI had no areas registered as being contaminated by cluster munitions.⁹¹⁸ The Shafaq News reported that clashes between Turkish forces and the PKK had caused several fires on agricultural lands and forests,⁹¹⁹ quoting a Mount Metin villager as saying that mutual shelling prevented access to farms and livestock breeding.⁹²⁰

Conflict-induced displacement and return

It was reported that numerous families were displaced from their homes in Dohuk governorate due to fighting between Turkish forces and the PKK, resulting in the depopulation of entire villages,⁹²¹ as reported in the Mount Metin area in autumn 2023⁹²² and in Deraluk in early

⁹¹³ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

⁹¹⁴ BBC News, Iraq media guide, 24 February 2023, [url](#)

⁹¹⁵ Shafaq News, Duhok detonates 100 mines and unexploded bombs, 15 February 2023, [url](#)

⁹¹⁶ Rudaw, Over 2,100 square km still contaminated by mines in Iraq, 23 December 2023, [url](#)

⁹¹⁷ Shafaq News, Duhok detonates 100 mines and unexploded bombs, 15 February 2023, [url](#)

⁹¹⁸ Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 61

⁹¹⁹ Shafaq News, Clashes between Turkish military, PKK ignite forest fires in Duhok, 20 September 2023, [url](#);

Shafaq News, Turkish Air Force strikes PKK targets in northern Iraq's Amadiyah District, 26 August 2023, [url](#)

⁹²⁰ Shafaq News, Turkish artillery strikes on PKK targets near Duhok raise concerns, 4 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹²¹ Rudaw, Iraqi border guards deployed to northern Duhok, 23 February 2024, [url](#)

⁹²² Shafaq News, Turkish artillery strikes on PKK targets near Duhok raise concerns, 4 October 2023, [url](#)

2024.⁹²³ However, IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)⁹²⁴ statistics as of December 2023 did not show any figures of IDPs originating from Dohuk.⁹²⁵

As of 31 December 2023, IOM recorded 744 returnees in the governorate.⁹²⁶ No information could be found on new returns occurring in Duhok during the reference period.

2.9. Erbil



Map 10: Erbil governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.⁹²⁷

⁹²³ Rudaw, Iraqi border guards deployed to northern Duhok, 23 February 2024, [url](#)

⁹²⁴ Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁹²⁵ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

⁹²⁶ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

⁹²⁷ UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, [url](#)

General description of governorate

Erbil (Arbil) governorate is located in northern Iraq⁹²⁸ and in the north-central part of the Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI).⁹²⁹ It has internal borders with the governorates of Dohuk, Sulaymaniyah, Ninewa, Kirkuk, and Salah Al-Din and shares international borders with Türkiye and Iran. It comprises the following districts: Erbil, Al-Zibar, Rawanduz, Shaqlawa, Koysinjaq (Koysinjaq), and Makhmur.⁹³⁰ However, most of Makhmur, including its district centre, is administered by Ninewa governorate.⁹³¹ Erbil city is both the capital of the governorate⁹³² and of the KRI.⁹³³

The governorate's population in 2022 was estimated at 2 055 448.⁹³⁴ Its inhabitants are mainly Kurdish but the governorate is also home to Arabs, Turkmen and Assyrians.⁹³⁵

For further information on the governorate's ethno-religious composition as well as its economy, please refer to section 2.9.1 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Armed actors' presence and control

For information on the governorate's conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to sections 2.9.2 and 2.9.3 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Erbil is controlled by the KDP with which the governorate's Peshmerga and security forces were affiliated.⁹³⁶ Erbil city housed the KRG's Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs (MoPA)⁹³⁷ and Ministry of Interior (MoI)⁹³⁸ and the headquarters of the unofficially KDP-affiliated Directorate General of Counter Terrorism (CTD) (Kurdistan CT).⁹³⁹ US military personnel were stationed at Harir base outside Erbil city⁹⁴⁰ and at Erbil International Airport.⁹⁴¹ Limited numbers of Iraqi border guards were deployed along the Iraq-Iran border.⁹⁴²

Most of the Iranian Kurdish opposition parties were based in KRG-controlled areas.⁹⁴³ Following an agreement between Iraq and Iran to disarm these groups by 19 September 2023

⁹²⁸ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Erbil Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

⁹²⁹ UNHCR Iraq, Iraq: Kurdistan Region and Northern Governorates [Map], 22 January 2023, [url](#)

⁹³⁰ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Erbil Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

⁹³¹ IOM Iraq, Labour Market Profile – Makhmur, Erbil Governorate, April 2022, [url](#), p. 4

⁹³² UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Erbil Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

⁹³³ Iraq, Kurdistan Regional Government, Facts & Figures, n.d., [url](#)

⁹³⁴ Iraq, CSO, [المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني](#) [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8

⁹³⁵ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

⁹³⁶ Rodgers, W., Iraqi Kurdistan's House of Cards Is Collapsing, FP, 22 March 2023, [url](#); Norway, Landinfo, Iran: Iransk-kurdiske partier med baser i Nord-Irak – Endret situasjon høsten 2023 [Iranian-Kurdish parties with bases in northern Iraq – changed situation in autumn 2023], 4 December 2023, [url](#), p. 3, footnote 5

⁹³⁷ Iraq, Kurdistan Regional Government, Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs, Contact, n.d., [url](#)

⁹³⁸ Iraq, Kurdistan Regional Government, Ministry of Interior, n.d., [url](#)

⁹³⁹ Rudaw, Unidentified drone injures two people in Sulaimani province, 9 August 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁴⁰ EPIC, ISHM: October 19 – 26, 2023, 26 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁴¹ ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 25, 2024, 25 January 2024, [url](#), p. 12

⁹⁴² EPIC, ISHM: September 14 – 21, 2023, 21 September 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁴³ Van Wilgenburg, W., Iran's Pressure Campaign on Iranian Kurds Continues, TWI, 13 September 2023, [url](#)

and relocate them from their bases,⁹⁴⁴ it was reported that Iranian Kurdish groups based along the Iraq-Iran border relocated in September 2023⁹⁴⁵ after vacating their camps in Erbil's Halgurd and Berbzín mountains.⁹⁴⁶ According to oral sources cited by Landinfo, the PDKI (Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan) fully or largely evacuated its camps and relocated its fighters further away from the border to a camp northeast of Erbil city, although some of its members were said to have returned in October 2023. Similarly, the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK) disarmed and left its two military camps for a civilian camp located northeast of Erbil city, according to an Iranian human rights organisation quoted by Landinfo.⁹⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), based in the Qandil mountains, refused to surrender its weapons,⁹⁴⁸ and as of December 2023, there were no indications that it had vacated its bases, according to Landinfo.⁹⁴⁹

The PKK continued to control territories in the Qandil mountains that lay outside of KRG control⁹⁵⁰ but withdrew from Makhmur refugee camp in October 2023.⁹⁵¹ The Peshmerga and the Iraqi Army eventually agreed to split control of several bases in Makhmur that had been abandoned by the PKK.⁹⁵² Meanwhile, ISIL only had a 'very limited' presence in the KRI.⁹⁵³

Recent security trends

Throughout the reference period, Turkish forces conducted ground and air attacks against PKK targets in the governorate,⁹⁵⁴ including in the Hakurk and Qandil regions.⁹⁵⁵ According to a representative of the human rights organisation Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT) quoted by the Rudaw news website, Türkiye conducted 475 strikes in Erbil in 2023.⁹⁵⁶ While Turkish anti-PKK operations were focused on Dohuk in the early months of the reference period, Turkish airstrikes and artillery strikes in northern areas of Erbil governorate significantly increased in June 2023. Following Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's re-election in late May 2023, PKK operations, including IED attacks on Turkish forces, intensified in Erbil. In June 2023, the group ended a ceasefire it had declared in February.⁹⁵⁷

⁹⁴⁴ AP, Tehran and Baghdad reach a deal to disarm and relocate Iranian dissident groups based in north Iraq, 28 August 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁴⁵ WKI, Kurdistan's Weekly Brief | September 26, 2023, 26 September 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁴⁶ Citadel (The), Disarmament deadline for Kurdish opposition Groups looms as backchannel negotiations continue, 17 September 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁴⁷ Norway, Landinfo, Iran: Iransk-kurdiske partier med baser i Nord-Irak – Endret situasjon høsten 2023 [Iranian-Kurdish parties with bases in northern Iraq – changed situation in autumn 2023], 4 December 2023, [url](#), pp. 3-4

⁹⁴⁸ Van Wilgenburg, W., Iran's Pressure Campaign on Iranian Kurds Continues, TWI, 13 September 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁴⁹ Norway, Landinfo, Iran: Iransk-kurdiske partier med baser i Nord-Irak – Endret situasjon høsten 2023 [Iranian-Kurdish parties with bases in northern Iraq – changed situation in autumn 2023], 4 December 2023, [url](#), p. 5

⁹⁵⁰ Van Wilgenburg, W., Iran's Pressure Campaign on Iranian Kurds Continues, TWI, 13 September 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁵¹ Shafaq News, PKK withdraws completely from Makhmour camp, 19 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁵² Rudaw, Peshmerga, Iraqi army to share control of Makhmour military posts, 4 November 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁵³ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, January 1, 2023 – March 31, 2023, 2 May 2023, [url](#), p. 32

⁹⁵⁴ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 32; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 26; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 18

⁹⁵⁵ Al Jazeera, Turkish air strikes target northern Iraq and Syria, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁵⁶ Rudaw, Turkey attacked Kurdistan Region, Iraq over 1,500 times in 2023: Monitor, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁵⁷ ACLED, Regional Overview Middle East – June 2023, 6 July 2023, [url](#)

Turkish airstrikes reportedly also targeted the PKK in Makhmur refugee camp in October 2023,⁹⁵⁸ allegedly injuring several civilians.⁹⁵⁹ After the PKK withdrew from several military posts in Makhmur in October 2023, clashes erupted between members of the Peshmerga and the Iraqi Army, leaving four Peshmerga dead.⁹⁶⁰

Starting on 18 October 2023, indirect attacks on facilities housing US forces and personnel from the international coalition against ISIL resumed after having been halted since May 2022,⁹⁶¹ with multiple drone strikes targeting Harir air base⁹⁶² and Erbil International Airport.⁹⁶³ The majority of attacks were claimed by the group Islamic Resistance in Iraq, which vowed to engage in operations in support of Hamas in Gaza.⁹⁶⁴

In another escalation, in late December 2023, suspected Iran-backed militants carried out drone attacks on a key Peshmerga base in Pirmam,⁹⁶⁵ an area that is home to high-ranking KDP cadres.⁹⁶⁶ There were also targeted attacks that left at least two Iranian Kurdish activists from the PDKI dead or injured.⁹⁶⁷ In mid-January 2024, a ballistic missile attack claimed by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) killed four civilians and injured six others as it struck a house in Erbil city. The IRGC's claim that the building was being used by Israeli intelligence services was rejected by the KRG.⁹⁶⁸

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 1 015 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Erbil governorate, of which 45 were coded as battles, 961 explosions/remote violence, and 9 incidents of violence against civilians.⁹⁶⁹ The vast majority of security incidents were documented in Rawanduz district. According to ACLED data, Turkish forces and PKK were involved in the majority of events coded as battles, and explosions/remote violence.

⁹⁵⁸ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 32

⁹⁵⁹ Rudaw, Suspected Turkish drone attack targets Makhmour camp, 7 October 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, Suspected Turkish drone strike targets Makhmour camp, 13 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁰ Rudaw, Peshmerga, Iraqi army to share control of Makhmour military posts, 4 November 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁶¹ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 22

⁹⁶² See, for example, EPIC, ISHM: December 28, 2023 – January 4, 2024, 4 January 2024, [url](#); ISW and CTP, Iran Update, December 6, 2023, 6 December 2023, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#)

⁹⁶³ See, for example, ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 19, 2024, 19 January 2024, [url](#); ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 10, 2024, 10 January 2024, [url](#); ISW and CTP, Iran Update, October 26, 2023, 26 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁴ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 22

⁹⁶⁵ VOA, In Major Escalation, Drones Target Key Kurdish Power Base Near Irbil, 2 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁶ Amwaj.media, Rare attack near heart of Iraqi Kurdish power holds multiple messages, 9 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁷ Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2; Hengaw, Assassination Attempt on Kurdish Lawyer and Political Activist Sohrab Rahmati in the Kurdistan Region, 16 November 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁸ HRW, Iraq: Iranian Attack Kills Civilians in Erbil, 22 January 2024, [url](#); Al-Monitor, How Iran chose easy targets in Iraq's Erbil to avoid Israeli reprisal, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁹ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

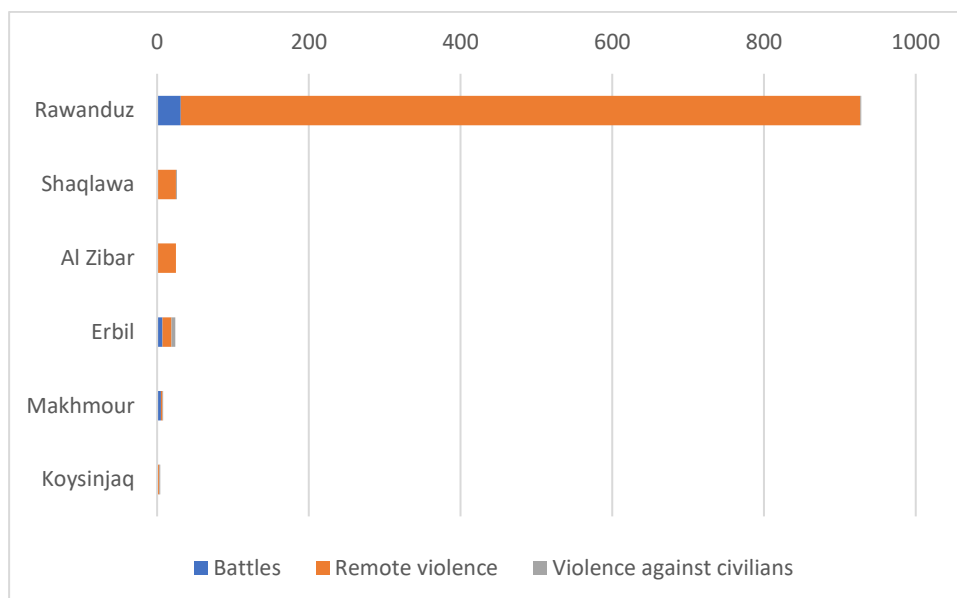


Figure 26. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Erbil governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.⁹⁷⁰

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 25 events leading to fatalities in Erbil governorate.⁹⁷¹

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 38 civilian casualties in Erbil governorate.⁹⁷² For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 4 civilian deaths in Erbil governorate.⁹⁷³

⁹⁷⁰ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

⁹⁷¹ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

⁹⁷² EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

⁹⁷³ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

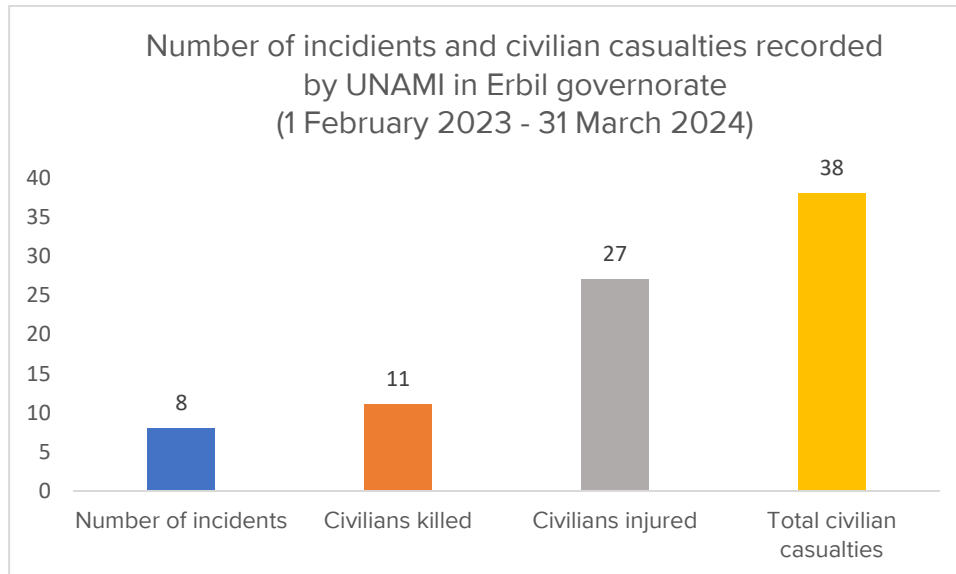


Figure 27. Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI in Erbil governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.⁹⁷⁴

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

According to the pro-Kurdish⁹⁷⁵ Shafaq News website, there were 3 512 registered minefields in the KRI.⁹⁷⁶ Data from the Iraqi Directorate of Mine Action cited by Rudaw indicated that more than 200 square kilometres of the KRI's territory remained contaminated with landmines and remnants of war.⁹⁷⁷ Remnants of war in the KRI comprised items planted by the former Iraqi government's armed forces, by Iranian forces during the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988), as well as remnants from the Türkiye-PKK conflict.⁹⁷⁸ As of the end of 2022, the Mine Action Review stated, with reference to the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA), that the KRI had no areas registered as being contaminated by cluster munitions.⁹⁷⁹ Old IEDs struck a civilian vehicle in the Sedikan area⁹⁸⁰ and killed several shepherds near Erbil city⁹⁸¹ and in the mountain areas of Haji Omaran,⁹⁸² as well as three Iraqi border guards in the Kani Qirzhala area.⁹⁸³

⁹⁷⁴ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

⁹⁷⁵ BBC News, Iraq media guide, 24 February 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁶ Shafaq News, Duhok detonates 100 mines and unexploded bombs, 15 February 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁷ Rudaw, Over 2,100 square km still contaminated by mines in Iraq, 23 December 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁸ Shafaq News, Duhok detonates 100 mines and unexploded bombs, 15 February 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁹ Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 61

⁹⁸⁰ EPIC, ISHM: March 30 – April 6, 2023, 6 April 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁸¹ Shafaq News, Landmine Explosion in Erbil Kills Two Shepherds: Lingerin Threats of ISIS Remnants, 28 March 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁸² Rudaw, Landmine explosion kills shepherd on Kurdistan Region-Iran border, 18 June 2023, [url](#)

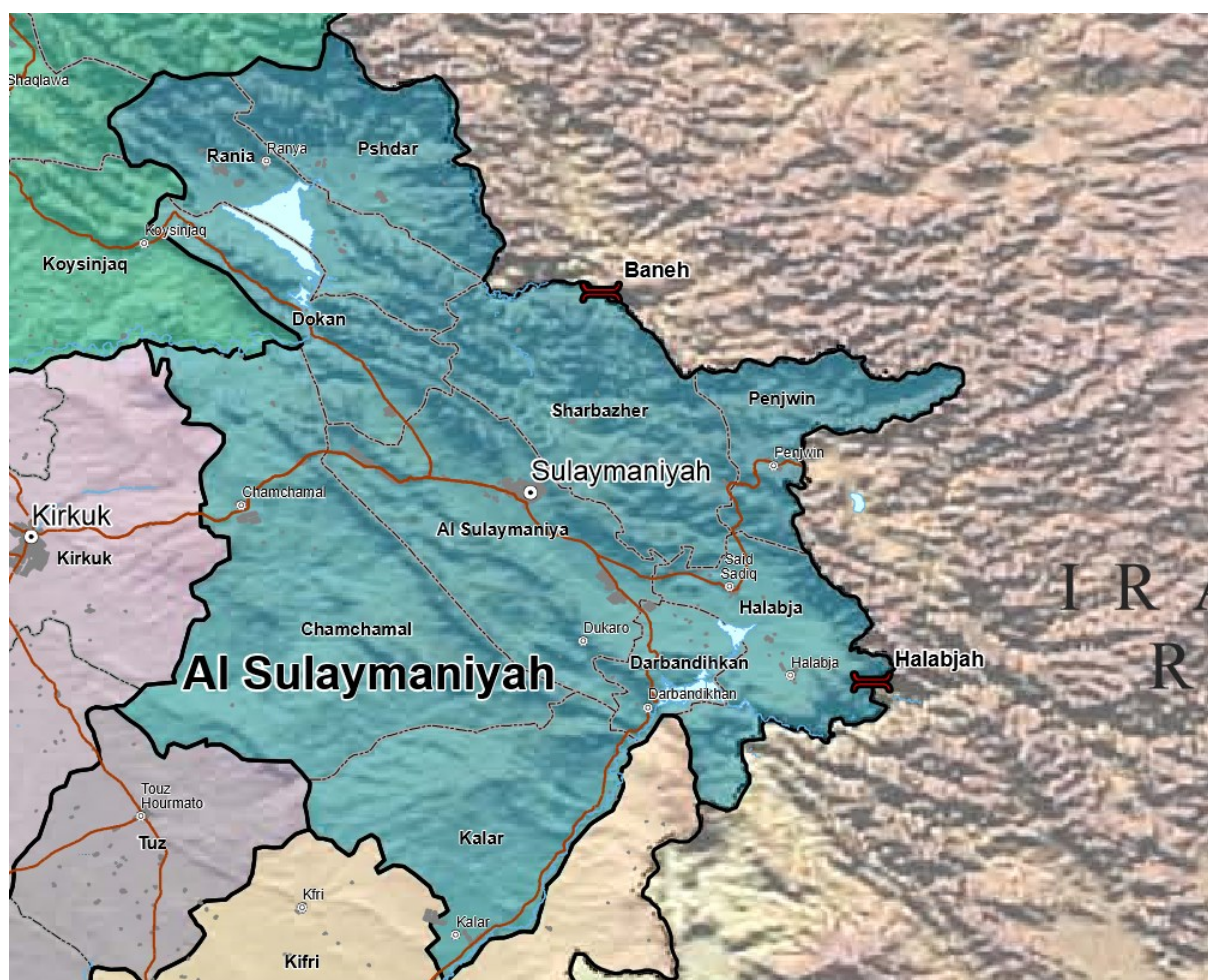
⁹⁸³ Rudaw, Landmine blast kills three border guards in Erbil, 10 March 2024, [url](#)

Conflict-induced displacement and return

No information could be found on new conflict-induced displacements occurring in Erbil during the reference period. IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)⁹⁸⁴ statistics as of December 2023 estimate the number of IDPs originating from Erbil to be 8 575 IDPs.⁹⁸⁵

As of 31 December 2023, IOM recorded 62 766 returnees in the governorate.⁹⁸⁶ No information could be found on new returns occurring in Erbil during the reference period.

2.10. Sulaymaniyah



Map 11: Sulaymaniyah governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.⁹⁸⁷

⁹⁸⁴ Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁹⁸⁵ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁶ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁷ UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, [url](#)

General description of governorate

Sulaymaniyah (Sulaymaniyyah, Slemani) governorate is located in north-eastern Iraq⁹⁸⁸ and in the south-eastern part of the Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI).⁹⁸⁹ It has internal borders with Erbil, Kirkuk, Salah Al-Din and Diyala governorates and shares an international border with Iran to the east. The governorate is divided into the districts of Sulaymaniyah, Pshdar, Rania, Dukan (Dokan), Sharbazher, Chamchamal, Kalar, Darbandikhan (Derbendikhan), Halabja (Halabcha), and Panjwin.⁹⁹⁰ The governorate's capital is the city of Sulaymaniyah.⁹⁹¹

The governorate's population in 2022 was estimated at 2 396 206.⁹⁹² Most of its residents are Sunni Kurds, though the governorate is also home to Shia Kurds and Chaldean Christians.⁹⁹³

For further information on the governorate's ethno-religious composition as well as its economy, please refer to section 2.10.1 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Armed actors' presence and control

For information on the governorate's conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to sections 2.10.2 and 2.10.3 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Sulaymaniyah is controlled by the PUK,⁹⁹⁴ which has its headquarters in the governorate.⁹⁹⁵ The PUK controlled the governorate's Peshmerga and security forces.⁹⁹⁶ The Peshmerga included PUK-controlled forces under the command of the KRG's Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs (MoPA) and the PUK's unit 70 which consisted of 48 000 fighters as of 2021.⁹⁹⁷ The PUK further maintained its own police forces (nominally under the control of the KRG's Ministry of Interior), *Asayish* forces and intelligence services (nominally under the Kurdistan Region Security Council).⁹⁹⁸ The Counter-Terrorism Group (CTG), a PUK-dominated⁹⁹⁹ US-partnered¹⁰⁰⁰

⁹⁸⁸ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Al-Sulaymaniyah Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁹ UNHCR Iraq, Iraq: Kurdistan Region and Northern Governorates [Map], 22 January 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁰ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Al-Sulaymaniyah Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#); UN IAU, Sulaymaniyah Governorate Profile [Map], November 2010, [url](#), p. 1

⁹⁹¹ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Al-Sulaymaniyah Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

⁹⁹² Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8

⁹⁹³ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁴ Rodgers, W., Iraqi Kurdistan's House of Cards Is Collapsing, FP, 22 March 2023, [url](#); Norway, Landinfo, Iran: Iransk-kurdiske partier med baser i Nord-Irak – Endret situasjon høsten 2023 [Iranian-Kurdish parties with bases in northern Iraq – changed situation in autumn 2023], 4 December 2023, [url](#), p. 3, footnote 5

⁹⁹⁵ Aydoğan, B., Iraqi Kurds Face Legitimacy Issues Amid Election Deadlock and Internal Division, TWI, 7 August 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁶ Rodgers, W., Iraqi Kurdistan's House of Cards Is Collapsing, FP, 22 March 2023, [url](#); Norway, Landinfo, Iran: Iransk-kurdiske partier med baser i Nord-Irak – Endret situasjon høsten 2023 [Iranian-Kurdish parties with bases in northern Iraq – changed situation in autumn 2023], 4 December 2023, [url](#), p. 3, footnote 5

⁹⁹⁷ Bakr, M.J., The War at Home: The Need for Internal Security Sector Reform in Iraqi Kurdistan, MEI, July 2021, [url](#), p. 8

⁹⁹⁸ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2022 - Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁹⁹⁹ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, April 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023, 3 August 2023, [url](#), p. 55

¹⁰⁰⁰ Jamestown Foundation (The), US-Backed Proxy Strengthens Iranian Hand in Intra-Kurdish Struggle, 12 May 2023, [url](#)

elite unit with intelligence capabilities,¹⁰⁰¹ was likewise based in Sulaymaniyah. In its anti-ISIL operations, it reportedly also cooperated with the People's Protection Units (YPG), a group viewed by the Turkish government as a Syrian branch of the PKK.¹⁰⁰² Internal security forces (*Asayish*) engaged in anti-ISIL operations in the governorate.¹⁰⁰³ Iraqi border guards were deployed along the border between Iraq and Iran.¹⁰⁰⁴

Three factions of the Iranian Kurdish opposition group Komala had adjacent bases near the village of Zirgwez southeast of the city of Sulaimaniyah.¹⁰⁰⁵ Oral sources cited by Landinfo confirmed that the Komala groups were still present at their bases in Zirgwez as of November 2023.¹⁰⁰⁶

There was a reported presence of PKK members in the governorate,¹⁰⁰⁷ and Turkish authorities claimed in April 2023 that PKK activity was increasing, claiming that the group had infiltrated security at Sulaymaniyah International Airport.¹⁰⁰⁸ ISIL had only a 'very limited' presence in the KRI,¹⁰⁰⁹ although there were several media reports of suspected ISIL members being arrested during the reference period.¹⁰¹⁰

Recent security trends

Throughout the reference period, Turkish forces conducted operations against PKK targets in the governorate,¹⁰¹¹ including in Sharbazher, Chamchamal,¹⁰¹² Panjwin,¹⁰¹³ and Pshdar districts.¹⁰¹⁴ According to a representative of the human rights organisation Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT), cited by the Rudaw news website, Türkiye conducted 420 strikes in Sulaymaniyah in 2023.¹⁰¹⁵ In addition to carrying out strikes directed against the PKK, suspected Turkish drones also targeted a convoy of Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)¹⁰¹⁶ and

¹⁰⁰¹ TWI, Iraqi Kurdistan: Priority Issues for International Mediation, 10 July 2020, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰² Rudaw, KRG deputy PM denies Turkey's claim of YPG presence at Arbat airport during strike, 20 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰³ Rudaw, Sulaimani security forces arrest 30 ISIS suspects, 23 February 2024, [url](#); Rudaw, Kurdish forces arrest two ISIS suspects in Sulaimani, 26 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁴ Asharq Al-Awsat, Iranian Revolutionary Guard Amass on Iraq's Kurdistan Border, 17 September 2023, [url](#); INA, Iraq deploys border guards on its borders with Iran, 14 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁵ Norway, Landinfo, Iran: Komala-CPI, 3 February 2021, [url](#), p. 10

¹⁰⁰⁶ Norway, Landinfo, Iran: Iransk-kurdiske partier med baser i Nord-Irak – Endret situasjon høsten 2023 [Iranian-Kurdish parties with bases in northern Iraq – changed situation in autumn 2023], 4 December 2023, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁰⁰⁷ EPIC, ISHM: September 7 – 14, 2023, 14 September 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: August 24 – 31, 2023, 31 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁸ EPIC, ISHM: April 6 – 13, 2023, 13 April 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁹ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, January 1, 2023 – March 31, 2023, 2 May 2023, [url](#), p. 32

¹⁰¹⁰ Rudaw, Sulaimani security forces arrest 30 ISIS suspects, 23 February 2024, [url](#); Rudaw, Kurdish forces arrest two ISIS suspects in Sulaimani, 26 August 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, Iraqi intelligence arrest 'important' ISIS member in Sulaimani, 18 April 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹¹ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 32; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 26; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 18

¹⁰¹² EPIC, ISHM: July 27 – August 10, 2023, 10 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹³ EPIC, ISHM: August 24 – 31, 2023, 31 August 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: April 13 – 20, 2023, 20 April 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁴ EPIC, ISHM: August 31 – September 7, 2023, 7 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁵ Rudaw, Turkey attacked Kurdistan Region, Iraq over 1,500 times in 2023: Monitor, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁶ ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 12, 2023, 14 April 2023, [url](#); USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, April 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023, 3 August 2023, [url](#), p. 56

killed several CTG members at Arbat airport where members of the Syria-based YPG were reportedly receiving training.¹⁰¹⁷ In January 2024, Turkish forces also increased attacks on the PUK.¹⁰¹⁸

Several civilians were also reportedly killed or injured in drone strikes, including in at least two suspected Turkish strikes in Panjwin district¹⁰¹⁹ and unidentified strikes in the same district¹⁰²⁰ and in an area of Pshdar district near the Qandil Mountains.¹⁰²¹ One unattributed drone strike hit a building in Kalar district that reportedly belonged to the Kurdistan Freedom Movement (KFM), a PKK-affiliated group, killing at least one unidentified person.¹⁰²²

There were also reports of targeted killings, including incidents linked to Türkiye's National Intelligence Organization (MIT), which has expanded its area of operations by killing individuals with suspected links to the PKK in Chamchamal and Sulaymaniyah districts.¹⁰²³ Moreover, an alleged 'hitman' of the Iranian state¹⁰²⁴ killed two members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (PDKI) in the border town of Qaladiza¹⁰²⁵ (Pshdar district),¹⁰²⁶ while a member of the Komala of Revolutionary Toilers of Iranian Kurdistan (Shorshger) faction was assassinated in Zirgwez.¹⁰²⁷

Deadly clashes between the Komala factions Shorshger and Komala of the Toilers of Kurdistan (Zahmatkeshan) erupted in Zirgwez in June 2023 following heightened tensions between the two groups.¹⁰²⁸

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 127 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Sulaymaniyah governorate, of which 23 were coded as battles, 88 explosions/remote violence and 15 incidents of violence against civilians.¹⁰²⁹ The highest number of security incidents was documented in Sulaymaniyah, and Sharbazher districts. According to ACLED data, Turkish forces and PKK were involved in the majority of events coded as battles and explosions/remote violence.

¹⁰¹⁷ Rudaw, YPG members were being trained at Arbat airport during Monday strike: Turkey, 19 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁸ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁹ Rudaw, Family says three civilians killed in Friday drone strike, 12 August 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, Turkish aircraft attack PKK sites in Duhok, 9 August 2023, [url](#); Airwars, US-led coalition in Iraq & Syria [filter: Sulaymaniyah; Turkish-Military], as of 4 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁰ Rudaw, Family says three civilians killed in Friday drone strike, 12 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰²¹ EPIC, ISHM: September 21 – 28, 2023, 28 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰²² Shafaq News, Unknown drone strike targets building in Kalar, 1 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰²³ ACLED, Regional Overview Middle East – June 2023, 6 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁴ Rudaw, Two KDPI members killed in Sulaimani province, 7 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁵ Hengaw, Hengaw's Investigation into the Assassination of Two Members of the KDPI in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, 7 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁶ Rudaw, Closure of Iranian border crossing crushes Kurdish village economy, 8 February 2020, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁷ Rudaw, Komala blames Iran in killing of member in Sulaimani, 16 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁸ New Arab (The), Two fighters killed during infighting between rival Iranian Kurdish parties in N. Iraq, 23 June 2023, [url](#); Kurdistan24, Two killed in Iranian-Kurdish opposition parties' feud in Sulaimani, 22 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁹ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

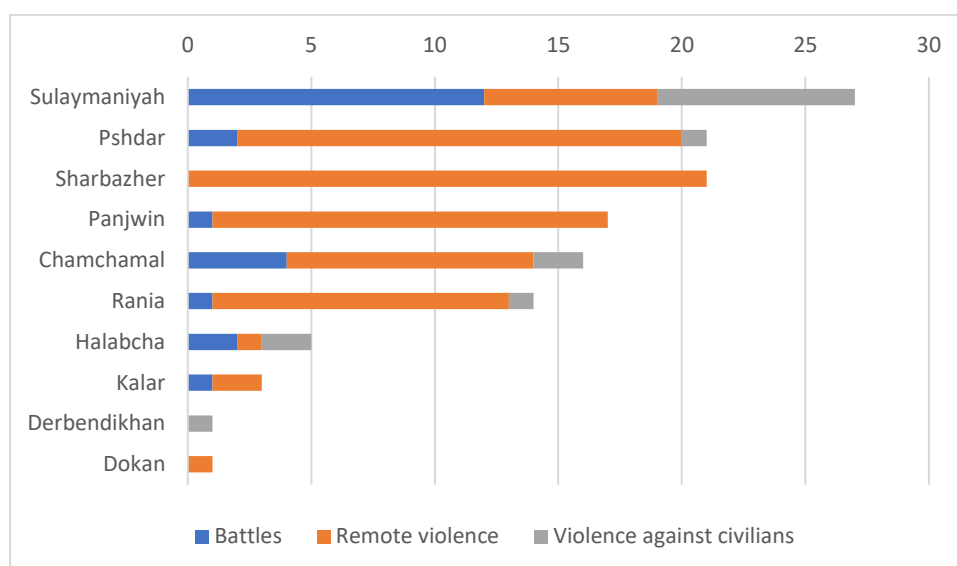


Figure 28. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Sulaymaniyah governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.¹⁰³⁰

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 22 events leading to fatalities in Sulaymaniyah governorate.¹⁰³¹

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 10 civilian casualties in Sulaymaniyah governorate.¹⁰³² For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 3 civilian deaths in Sulaymaniyah governorate.¹⁰³³

¹⁰³⁰ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

¹⁰³¹ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

¹⁰³² EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

¹⁰³³ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

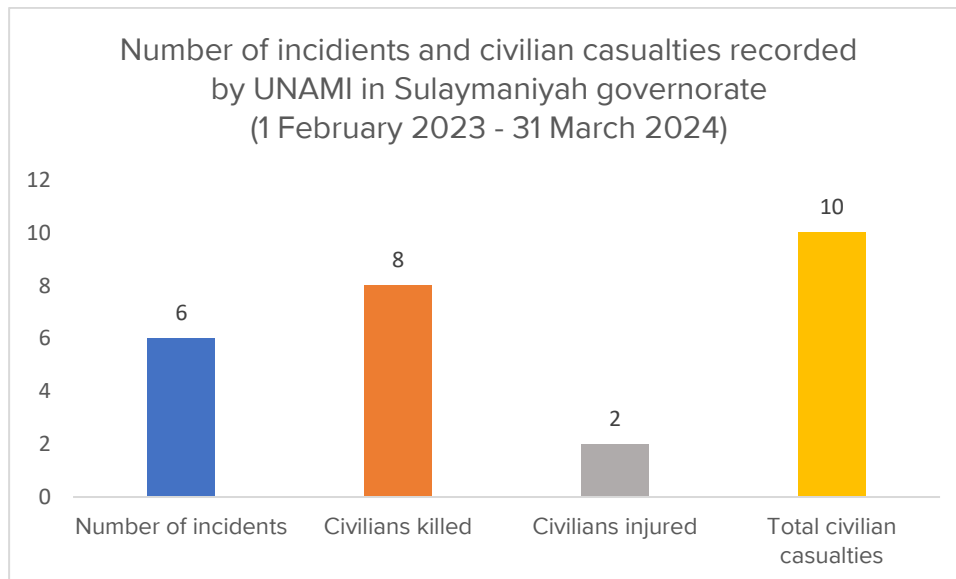


Figure 29. Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI in Sulaymaniyah governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.¹⁰³⁴

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

During the reference period, there were at least two separate rocket attacks on the Khor Mor gas field in Qadir Karam subdistrict¹⁰³⁵ (Chamchamal district).¹⁰³⁶ One of them resulted in wide-scale temporary power outages.¹⁰³⁷ According to the pro-Kurdish¹⁰³⁸ Shafaq News website, there were 3 512 registered minefields in the KRI.¹⁰³⁹ Data from the Iraqi Directorate of Mine Action cited by Rudaw indicated that more than 200 square kilometres of the KRI's territory remained contaminated with landmines and remnants of war.¹⁰⁴⁰ Remnants of war in the KRI comprised items planted by the former Iraqi government's armed forces, by Iranian forces during the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988), and remnants from the Türkiye-PKK conflict.¹⁰⁴¹ As of the end of 2022, the Mine Action Review stated with reference to the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA) that the KRI had no areas registered as being contaminated by cluster munitions.¹⁰⁴² During the reference period, several civilians were killed or injured by remnants of war in Kalar¹⁰⁴³ and Panjwin districts¹⁰⁴⁴ and near the town of Mawat.¹⁰⁴⁵

¹⁰³⁴ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

¹⁰³⁵ EPIC, ISHM: January 25 – February 1, 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: August 24 – 31, 2023, 31 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰³⁶ Rudaw, Sulaimani's key gas field targeted by rocket, 22 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰³⁷ EPIC, ISHM: January 25 – February 1, 2024, 1 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰³⁸ BBC News, Iraq media guide, 24 February 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰³⁹ Shafaq News, Duhok detonates 100 mines and unexploded bombs, 15 February 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁰ Rudaw, Over 2,100 square km still contaminated by mines in Iraq, 23 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴¹ Shafaq News, Duhok detonates 100 mines and unexploded bombs, 15 February 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴² Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 61

¹⁰⁴³ EPIC, ISHM: January 18 – January 25, 2024, 25 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁴ basnews, Landmine Blast Severely Wounds Kurdish Villager in Sulaymaniyah, 27 April 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: March 7 – 14, 2024, 14 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁵ basnews, Landmine Blast Severely Wounds Kurdish Villager in Sulaymaniyah, 27 April 2023, [url](#)

Conflict-induced displacement and return

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)¹⁰⁴⁶ statistics as of December 2023 did not record any IDPs originating from Sulaymaniyah¹⁰⁴⁷ or returnees living in the governorate.¹⁰⁴⁸

2.11. Basrah



Map 12: Basrah governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations¹⁰⁴⁹

General description of governorate

Basrah (Basra, Al-Basrah, Al-Basra) is Iraq's southeasternmost governorate. It has internal borders with the governorates of Muthanna, Thi-Qar (Dhi Qar), and Missan¹⁰⁵⁰ and shares international borders with Iran to the east and Kuwait to the south. It also borders Saudi-Arabia

¹⁰⁴⁶ Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁰⁴⁷ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁸ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁹ UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁰ UNOCHA and IIMAP, Iraq: Al-Basrah Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

at the tripoint with Kuwait.¹⁰⁵¹ The governorate's capital is Basrah city.¹⁰⁵² The governorate is divided into the following districts: Abu Al-Khaseeb, Al-Mahoudiya (Al-Midaina, Al-Madina), Al-Qurna (Al-Qarna), Al-Zubair, Basrah, Al-Faw, and Shatt Al-Arab.¹⁰⁵³

Basrah governorate's population in 2022 was estimated at 3 223 158.¹⁰⁵⁴ The majority of its residents are Shia Arab¹⁰⁵⁵ and the governorate has been described as 'a stronghold of Shiites in southern Iraq',¹⁰⁵⁶ although it is also home to a minority of Sunni Arabs and small communities of Mandaean and Christians.¹⁰⁵⁷

For further information on the governorate's ethno-religious composition as well as its economy, please refer to section 2.11.1 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Armed actors' presence and control

For information on the governorate's conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to sections 2.11.2 and 2.11.3 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Security actors in the governorate consisted of the Iraqi Army, police, PMF, and armed political parties¹⁰⁵⁸ including the Sadrist Movement's Saraya al-Salam¹⁰⁵⁹ and the Coordination Framework (CF)-affiliated¹⁰⁶⁰ Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH).¹⁰⁶¹ The Basrah Operations Command (BasOC) is headquartered in Basrah city,¹⁰⁶² and its commander was also in charge of the Badr-affiliated 1st PMF Brigade (*Imam Muhammad al Jawad*).¹⁰⁶³ According to a local tribal leader cited by Shafaq News, security forces were weak and subordinated to political interest groups.¹⁰⁶⁴ Indeed, according to Haidar Al-Ibrahimi, CEO of Peace Paradigms and an expert on peacebuilding and tribal reconciliation who was interviewed by EUAA for an April 2023 report, tribes in Basrah and other parts of southern Iraq 'are heavily polarized and supported by key armed actors and have become a key competitor to state's security institutions'.¹⁰⁶⁵

¹⁰⁵¹ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Al-Basrah Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#); Fürtig, H., Geschichte des Irak [History of Iraq] [Map], 2016, pp. 188-189

¹⁰⁵² EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵³ UN-Habitat, Basra Urban Profile, October 2020, [url](#), p. 14; UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Al-Basrah Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁴ Iraq, CSO, *المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني* [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8

¹⁰⁵⁵ Skelton, M. and Saleem, Z.A., Living among the Hashd, IRIS, July 2021, [url](#), p. 18

¹⁰⁵⁶ Al-Shammari, I., An Independent Federal State for Sunnis in Iraq, CFRI, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁷ Skelton, M. and Saleem, Z.A., Living among the Hashd, IRIS, July 2021, [url](#), p. 18

¹⁰⁵⁸ PAX, Human Security Survey: Iraq, Basra, 8 February 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁰⁵⁹ Ali, S., Between Power Sharing and Power Consolidation: The Impact of Iraq's Provincial Elections Results, TWI, 7 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁰ Al-Monitor, Understanding Iraq's Coordination Framework, 13 August 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶¹ Shafaq News, Observers warn of potential conflict between CF and Sadrist movement in southern Iraqi cities, 11 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶² USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 19

¹⁰⁶³ ISW and CTP, The Leadership and Purpose of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces, 19 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁴ Shafaq News, How does political conflict fuel tribal disputes in Iraq?, 25 April 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁵ EUAA, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#), p. 83



Both the Basrah Police Command¹⁰⁶⁶ and the Iraqi National Security Service (INSS) were tasked with combating drug trafficking,¹⁰⁶⁷ while the 16th Border Brigade¹⁰⁶⁸ and intelligence agencies¹⁰⁶⁹ cracked down on cross-border smuggling and infiltration.¹⁰⁷⁰ In late 2022, the authorities began to fortify the southeastern section of Iraq's border with Iran.¹⁰⁷¹ By August 2023, over 700 towers and numerous thermal cameras had been installed along the border between Basrah's Al-Faw district and Sulaymaniyah governorate, according to the commander of Iraq's Border Guards Force.¹⁰⁷²

Recent security trends

A survey on human security conducted by PAX¹⁰⁷³ in Basrah every year since 2018¹⁰⁷⁴ assessed that 'the general security perceptions of local communities across the districts of Basra have improved'.¹⁰⁷⁵ At the same time, the governorate has long witnessed intra-Shia conflicts between the Sadr Movement's Saraya Al-Salam militia and AAH over control of the governorate's rich oil resources.¹⁰⁷⁶

These tensions came to the fore in summer 2023 as unidentified armed individuals carried out attacks on the office of an MP from the AAH-affiliated Sadiqoun bloc,¹⁰⁷⁷ on a building complex serving as a PMF headquarters,¹⁰⁷⁸ and on the office of the Imam Ali Brigades,¹⁰⁷⁹ with no reports of casualties.¹⁰⁸⁰ Meanwhile, AAH allegedly carried out an attack on the residence of a Saraya Al-Salam commander, triggering armed protests by Saraya Al-Salam.¹⁰⁸¹ Security forces were reportedly reinforced in the governorate.¹⁰⁸²

¹⁰⁶⁶ Rudaw, Iraq sacks Basra's anti-narcotic head, 1 December 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁷ NINA, 10 kilograms of crystal seized from three drug traffickers in Basra, 1 January 2024, [url](#); INA, 5 drug dealers held, 10 kg of hashish seized in Basra, 23 November 2023, [url](#); INA, INSS arrests a pharmacist working in drug trafficking in Basra, 27 March 2023, [url](#); Diyaruna, IRGC and its proxies exploit drug trade at expense of regional neighbours, 19 May 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁸ NINA, 17 Foreign Infiltrators, Tried To Cross The Border In Basra Sector Illegally, Arrested, 16 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁹ NINA, 14 Persons Of Foreign Nationality, Tried To Infiltrate Into Basra, Arrested, 24 June 2023, [url](#); NINA, Eight foreigners who tried to infiltrate Iraqi territory were arrested in Basra, 24 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁰ NINA, 17 Foreign Infiltrators, Tried To Cross The Border In Basra Sector Illegally, Arrested, 16 July 2023, [url](#); NINA, 14 Persons Of Foreign Nationality, Tried To Infiltrate Into Basra, Arrested, 24 June 2023, [url](#); NINA, Eight foreigners who tried to infiltrate Iraqi territory were arrested in Basra, 24 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷¹ Diyaruna, Iraq fortifies border with Iran to curb infiltration, smuggling, 13 December 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷² INA, Including plans to end smuggling, (INA) opens 9 files with the commander of the border guards, 9 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷³ PAX is a Netherlands-based organisation that engages in peace work. PAX, Who we are, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁴ PAX, Human Security Survey: Iraq, Basra, 8 February 2024, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁰⁷⁵ PAX, Human Security Survey: Iraq, Basra, 8 February 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁰⁷⁶ Ali, S., Between Power Sharing and Power Consolidation: The Impact of Iraq's Provincial Elections Results, TWI, 7 March 2024, [url](#); Alaaldin, R., Shiite rivalries could break Iraq's deceptive calm in 2023 [Commentary], Brookings, 1 March 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁷ EPIC, ISHM: June 22 – July 6, 2023, 6 July 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: June 15 – 22, 2023, 22 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁸ EPIC, ISHM: June 22 – July 6, 2023, 6 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁹ NINA, Targeting the office of the Imam Ali Brigades, north of Basra, with gunfire, 12 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁰ EPIC, ISHM: June 22 – July 6, 2023, 6 July 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: June 15 – 22, 2023, 22 June 2023, [url](#); NINA, Targeting the office of the Imam Ali Brigades, north of Basra, with gunfire, 12 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸¹ EPIC, ISHM: June 22 – July 6, 2023, 6 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸² New Arab (The), Iraq: Sadr supporters shut down rival party's headquarters after 'insults' against leader's father, 16 July 2023, [url](#)



Tensions between the Sadrist Movement and factions of the Coordination Framework (CF) escalated again in the run-up to the provincial council elections¹⁰⁸³ held in December 2023,¹⁰⁸⁴ which saw an AAH-supported candidate running for the governorship against the Sadr-aligned incumbent governor Asaad Al-Eidani.¹⁰⁸⁵ In early November, several people were killed or injured in a gunfight¹⁰⁸⁶ between AAH and Sadrist militia members, possibly prompted by the assassination of a Sadr supporter by AAH militants.¹⁰⁸⁷ This was followed by a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) attack on the Basrah main office of Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law coalition,¹⁰⁸⁸ a group affiliated with the CF.¹⁰⁸⁹ After the elections, armed fighting re-erupted in late December 2023 and flared up again in February¹⁰⁹⁰ and March 2024, with AAH and PMF facilities being targeted.¹⁰⁹¹ The Media Line news agency¹⁰⁹² quoted Basrah residents as saying that the police were unable to intervene during the clashes.¹⁰⁹³

Meanwhile, several armed attacks were carried out by unidentified perpetrators against civilians,¹⁰⁹⁴ including a gun attack on a residential house in Al-Harthia area that left one woman dead and several family members injured.¹⁰⁹⁵ Especially from September 2023 onwards, there were multiple reports of armed tribal disputes,¹⁰⁹⁶ with clashes leaving several people injured in the Tamimiya,¹⁰⁹⁷ Al-Deir (Al-Zwain),¹⁰⁹⁸ and Khor Al-Zubair areas.¹⁰⁹⁹ At least one woman was killed in an alleged family dispute,¹¹⁰⁰ and there were reports of unspecified

¹⁰⁸³ Shafaq News, Observers warn of potential conflict between CF and Sadrist movement in southern Iraqi cities, 11 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁴ Reuters, Iraq's ruling Shi'ite alliance leads in provincial elections -initial results, 19 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁵ Shafaq News, Observers warn of potential conflict between CF and Sadrist movement in southern Iraqi cities, 11 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁶ EPIC, ISHM: November 2 – 9, 2023, 9 November 2023, [url](#); NINA, Five people killed and wounded in an armed conflict in Basra, 8 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁷ EPIC, ISHM: November 2 – 9, 2023, 9 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁸ EPIC, ISHM: November 30 – December 7, 2023, 7 December 2023, [url](#); UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 7

¹⁰⁸⁹ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 7

¹⁰⁹⁰ Media Line (The), Daily Clashes Between Iran-Backed Militias in Iraq Kill Over 200 Fighters, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹¹ Shafaq News, Basra: Explosive device near AAH headquarters; gunfire targets government buildings, 17 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹² The Media Line is a US news agency covering the Middle East. Media Line (The), About Us, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁰⁹³ Media Line (The), Daily Clashes Between Iran-Backed Militias in Iraq Kill Over 200 Fighters, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁴ NINA, A woman was killed and others from one family were injured in an armed attack in Basra, 3 January 2024, [url](#); NINA, An unknown person opens fire on shops and cars in Al-Zubair, Basra, 13 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁵ NINA, A woman was killed and others from one family were injured in an armed attack in Basra, 3 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁶ Media Line (The), Daily Clashes Between Iran-Backed Militias in Iraq Kill Over 200 Fighters, 21 February 2024, [url](#); NINA, Arresting those accused of firing gunshots at a tribal dispute in Basra, 8 March 2024; NINA, An armed tribal conflict north of Basra resolved, 19 January 2024, [url](#); NINA, Resolving an armed tribal conflict and arresting those responsible south of Basra, 15 November 2023, [url](#); NINA, Two people injured in a tribal dispute and two of its instigators arrested in Basra, 10 November 2023, [url](#); NINA, Resolving an armed tribal conflict and arresting 10 of its perpetrators north of Basra, 28 October 2023, [url](#); Al-Sharqiya, A fierce tribal conflict in Basra, 8 September 2023, [url](#); NINA, 2 Suspects Arrested For Shooting A Citizen North Of Basra, 15 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁷ Al-Sharqiya, A fierce tribal conflict in Basra, 8 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁸ NINA, 2 Suspects Arrested For Shooting A Citizen North Of Basra, 15 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁹ NINA, Two people injured in a tribal dispute and two of its instigators arrested in Basra, 10 November 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁰ NINA, Basra police reveal the murder of a woman in the north of the governorate, 25 December 2023, [url](#)

‘quarrels’¹¹⁰¹ and violent crime,¹¹⁰² although the Basrah police chief was quoted as saying that the crime rate in 2023 was 16 % lower than in 2022.¹¹⁰³

In a further development, following the public burning of a copy of the Quran by a right-wing group in Copenhagen in July 2023, protesters in Basrah city attacked the premises of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), with no casualties reported.¹¹⁰⁴

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 108 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Basrah governorate, of which 55 were coded as battles, 14 explosions/remote violence, and 39 incidents of violence against civilians.¹¹⁰⁵ The highest number of security incidents was documented in Basrah and Al Zubair districts. According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups and unidentified tribal militias were involved in the majority of events coded as battles and violence against civilians.

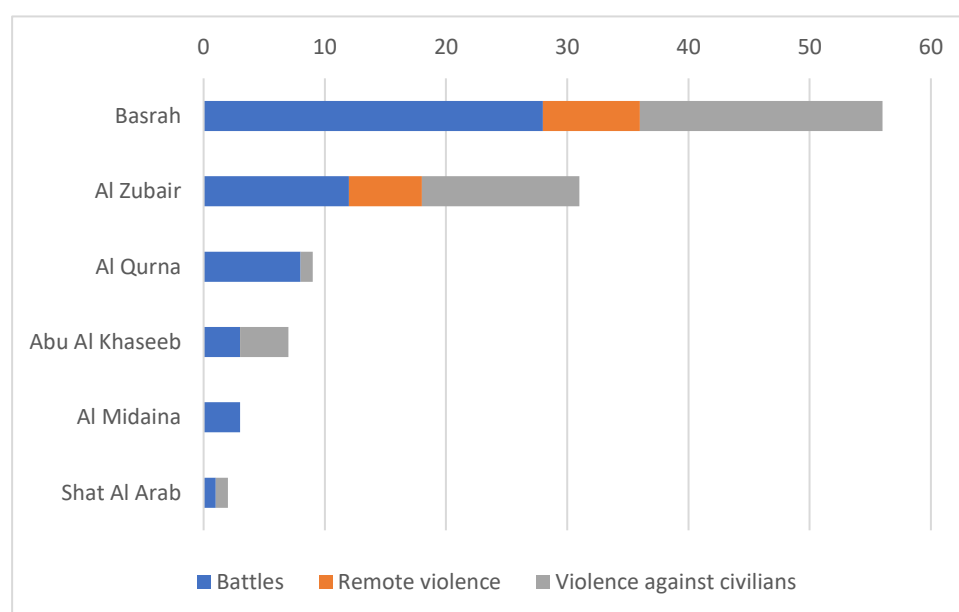


Figure 30. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Basrah governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.¹¹⁰⁶

¹¹⁰¹ NINA, /10/ persons accused creating a quarrel arrested north of Basra, 1 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁰² Shafaq News, Basra man faces tribal pressure after suing robbers, 3 March 2024, [url](#); NINA, Interior Ministry: The Killer of a truck Driver arrested in Basra, 19 July 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁰³ Al-Sharqiya, Crime rate in Basra decreased by 16%, 31 December 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁴ AP, Protesters try to storm Baghdad's Green Zone over the burning of Quran and Iraqi flag in Denmark, 22 July 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁵ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁶ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP did not record any events resulting in fatalities in Basrah governorate.¹¹⁰⁷

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 12 civilian casualties in Basrah governorate.¹¹⁰⁸ For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Basrah governorate.¹¹⁰⁹

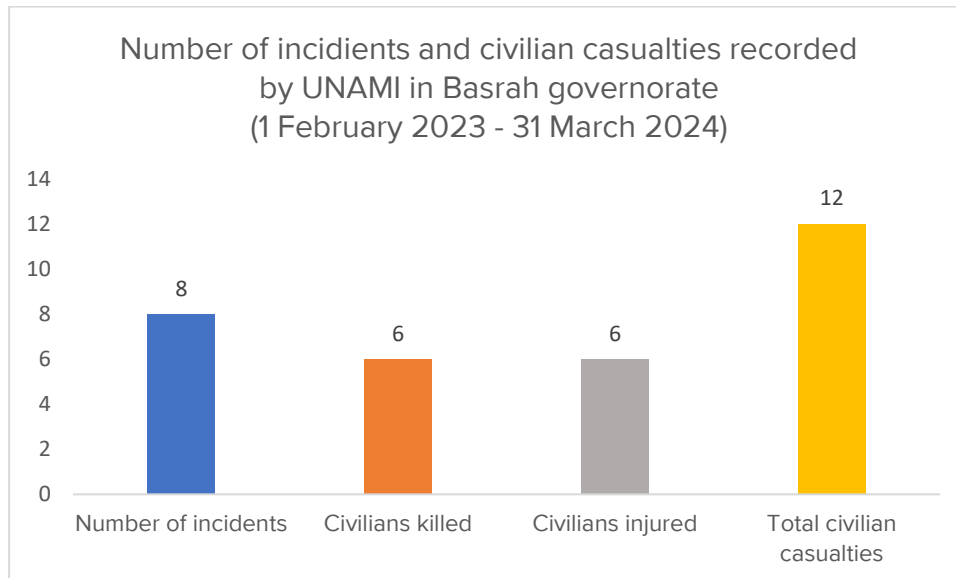


Figure 31. Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI in Basrah governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.¹¹¹⁰

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

No information on new conflict-related infrastructure damage occurring in the reference period could be found within the time constraints of this report. As of the end of 2022, the head of the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA)'s Regional Mine Action Centre-South was quoted as saying that 1 237 000 000 square metres of the governorate's area were contaminated with mines, cluster munitions and remnants of war,¹¹¹¹ whilst the Mine Action Review estimated the area contaminated with cluster munitions specifically at 46 497 041 square metres.¹¹¹² During the reference period, there were reports of several individuals being

¹¹⁰⁷ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

¹¹⁰⁸ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

¹¹⁰⁹ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

¹¹¹⁰ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

¹¹¹¹ Al-Sharqiya, Basra most contaminated with war remnants, 17 December 2022, [url](#)

¹¹¹² Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 61

killed or injured by old IEDs in the southern Safwan subdistrict¹¹¹³ and in the South Rumaila area.¹¹¹⁴

Conflict-induced displacement and return

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)¹¹¹⁵ statistics as of December 2023 did not record any IDPs originating from Basrah¹¹¹⁶ or returnees living in the governorate.¹¹¹⁷

2.12. Karbala



Map 13: Karbala governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.¹¹¹⁸

¹¹¹³ EPIC, ISHM: August 31 – September 7, 2023, 7 September 2023, [url](#); NINA, Two children were injured in a military remnant explosion in a Safwan farm, west of Basra, 18 July 2023, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁴ EPIC, ISHM: December 14 – 28, 2023, 28 December 2023, [url](#); NINA, Two children killed and their third brother wounded in a mine explosion in the Rumaila area, west of Basra, 11 September 2023, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: April 27 – May 4, 2023, 4 May 2023, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁵ Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

¹¹¹⁶ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁷ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁸ UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, [url](#)

General description of governorate

Karbala (Kerbala, Kerbela) governorate is located in central Iraq,¹¹¹⁹ southwest of Baghdad.¹¹²⁰ It has internal borders with Anbar, Najaf, and Babil governorates and is divided into the following districts: Ain Al-Tamur, Al-Hindiya, and Karbala.¹¹²¹ The capital of the governorate is Karbala city.¹¹²² The governorate's population in 2022 was estimated at 1 350 577¹¹²³ and the majority of its inhabitants are Shia Arab.¹¹²⁴

For further information on the governorate's ethno-religious composition as well as its economy, please refer to section 2.12.1 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Armed actors' presence and control

For information on the governorate's conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to sections 2.12.2 and 2.12.3 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

In 2023, the Iraqi Army transferred the governorate's security responsibilities to the local police.¹¹²⁵ The Karbala Operations Command is headquartered in Karbala city.¹¹²⁶ PMFs operating in the governorate included the *Liwa al-Tafuf* (13th PMF Brigade), which ran a training centre in Karbala,¹¹²⁷ the Harakat Al-Nujaba (HAN) (whose fighters were also deployed in several other governorates to man positions and checkpoints and to participate in the fight against ISIL),¹¹²⁸ and possibly the 37th¹¹²⁹ and 41st PMF Brigades.¹¹³⁰ The existence of a major KH complex in Ain Al-Tamr district for the production of rocket artillery, as claimed by security expert Michael Knights, had not been officially confirmed as of May 2023.¹¹³¹ The PMF reportedly played the most active role among all security actors in protecting the Arbäeen pilgrimage.¹¹³²

¹¹¹⁹ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Kerbala Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

¹¹²⁰ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

¹¹²¹ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Kerbala Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

¹¹²² EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

¹¹²³ Iraq, CSO, *المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني* [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8

¹¹²⁴ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

¹¹²⁵ New Arab (The), Transfer of security responsibilities from Iraq's army to local police stalled by challenges, 18 September 2023, [url](#)

¹¹²⁶ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 19

¹¹²⁷ TWI, Profile: Liwa al-Tafuf (13th PMF Brigade), 3 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹²⁸ Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (The), The Nujaba Movement – the Movement of the Noble Ones: One of the dominant pro-Iranian militias in Iraq, 14 May 2023, [url](#), p. 10

¹¹²⁹ NINA, A fighter in the Popular Mobilization killed in an explosive device explosion in the Anbar desert, 27 May 2023

¹¹³⁰ NINA, The Popular Mobilization carries out a pre-emptive security operation on the Baghdad-Samarra road, 2 September 2023

¹¹³¹ Rudolf, I., Tracing the Role of the Violent Entrepreneurs in the Iraqi Post-Conflict Economy, New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy, May 2023, [url](#), p. 8

¹¹³² AGSIW, Identity and Power Politics: Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces on the Arbäeen Pilgrimage, 24 October 2023, [url](#)



Recent security trends

During the reference period, the 2nd¹¹³³ and 6th Brigades of the Energy Police¹¹³⁴ carried out several operations to combat petroleum smuggling,¹¹³⁵ while a number of alleged drug dealers were arrested in anti-drug trafficking operations conducted by the governorate's Directorate for Combating Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances,¹¹³⁶ the 5th Brigade of the Rapid Response Division Command,¹¹³⁷ and the Karbala Intelligence and Security Directorate.¹¹³⁸ In February 2023, police also carried out a campaign to search farms and desert areas for wanted persons and illegal weapons, arresting several individuals and seizing ammunitions and various types of weapons.¹¹³⁹

In December 2023, an operation by the Karbala police command to arrest three wanted gang members led to an exchange of gunfire in which an officer was injured.¹¹⁴⁰ Meanwhile, a member of the 37th PMF Brigade was killed in an IED explosion in the desert area between Karbala and Anbar.¹¹⁴¹ In another case, a decapitated body was found, with no details regarding the motive behind the killing.¹¹⁴²

Arrangements to ensure security during the 2023 Arbaeen pilgrimage included the stationing of security forces along the pilgrimage routes,¹¹⁴³ with 20 000 PMFs reportedly deployed to secure the area between the Iraq-Iran border and Karbala city. Moreover, some 3 000 PMF intelligence operatives infiltrated the ranks of pilgrims, according to the PMF chief of staff.¹¹⁴⁴ No information could be found on security-related incidents around Arbaeen in 2023.

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 11 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Basrah governorate, of which 5 were coded as battles, 1 explosions/remote violence, and 5 incidents of violence against civilians.¹¹⁴⁵ All incidents occurred in Karbala district.

¹¹³³ INA, (3) Accused of smuggling petroleum products arrested in Salah al-Din and Karbala, 9 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹³⁴ NINA, (3) persons accused of smuggling petroleum products arrested and two vehicles seized in Babylon and Karbala, 10 March 2024, [url](#); INA, (3) Accused of smuggling petroleum products arrested in Salah al-Din and Karbala, 9 February 2024, [url](#); NINA, Three persons accused of smuggling petroleum derivatives arrested and their vehicles seized in Babylon and Karbala, 1 October 2023

¹¹³⁵ NINA, (3) persons accused of smuggling petroleum products arrested and two vehicles seized in Babylon and Karbala, 10 March 2024, [url](#); INA, (3) Accused of smuggling petroleum products arrested in Salah al-Din and Karbala, 9 February 2024, [url](#); NINA, Three persons accused of smuggling petroleum derivatives arrested and their vehicles seized in Babylon and Karbala, 1 October 2023

¹¹³⁶ NINA, The Rapid Response Division arrests two people accused of drug trafficking in Karbala, 3 March 2024, [url](#); NINA, Karbala police arrest a dangerous drug dealer, 14 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹³⁷ NINA, The Rapid Response Division arrests two people accused of drug trafficking in Karbala, 3 March 2024, [url](#)

¹¹³⁸ NINA, Intelligence forces arrest a dangerous terrorist element south of Baghdad, 1 March 2023

¹¹³⁹ NINA, Karbala police finds large quantities of weapons and equipment, 10 February 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁴⁰ NINA, Gang members arrested after an armed clash in Karbala, 26 December 2023

¹¹⁴¹ NINA, A fighter in the Popular Mobilization killed in an explosive device explosion in the Anbar desert, 27 May 2023

¹¹⁴² NINA, A Decapitated Body Found and Perpetrator Arrested in Karbala, 9 February 2023

¹¹⁴³ National (The), Millions flock to Iraqi city of Karbala for Arbaeen pilgrimage, 6 September 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁴⁴ AGSIW, Identity and Power Politics: Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces on the Arbaeen Pilgrimage, 24 October 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁴⁵ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)



For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any events resulting in fatalities in Karbala governorate.¹¹⁴⁶

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI did not record any civilian casualties in Karbala governorate.¹¹⁴⁷ For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Karbala governorate.¹¹⁴⁸

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

No information on new conflict-related infrastructure damage occurring in the reference period could be found within the time constraints of this report. As of the end of 2022, the Mine Action Review estimated the area contaminated with cluster munitions at 141 910 square metres.¹¹⁴⁹

Conflict-induced displacement and return

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)¹¹⁵⁰ statistics as of December 2023 did not record any IDPs originating from Karbala¹¹⁵¹ or returnees living in the governorate.¹¹⁵²

¹¹⁴⁶ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

¹¹⁴⁷ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

¹¹⁴⁸ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

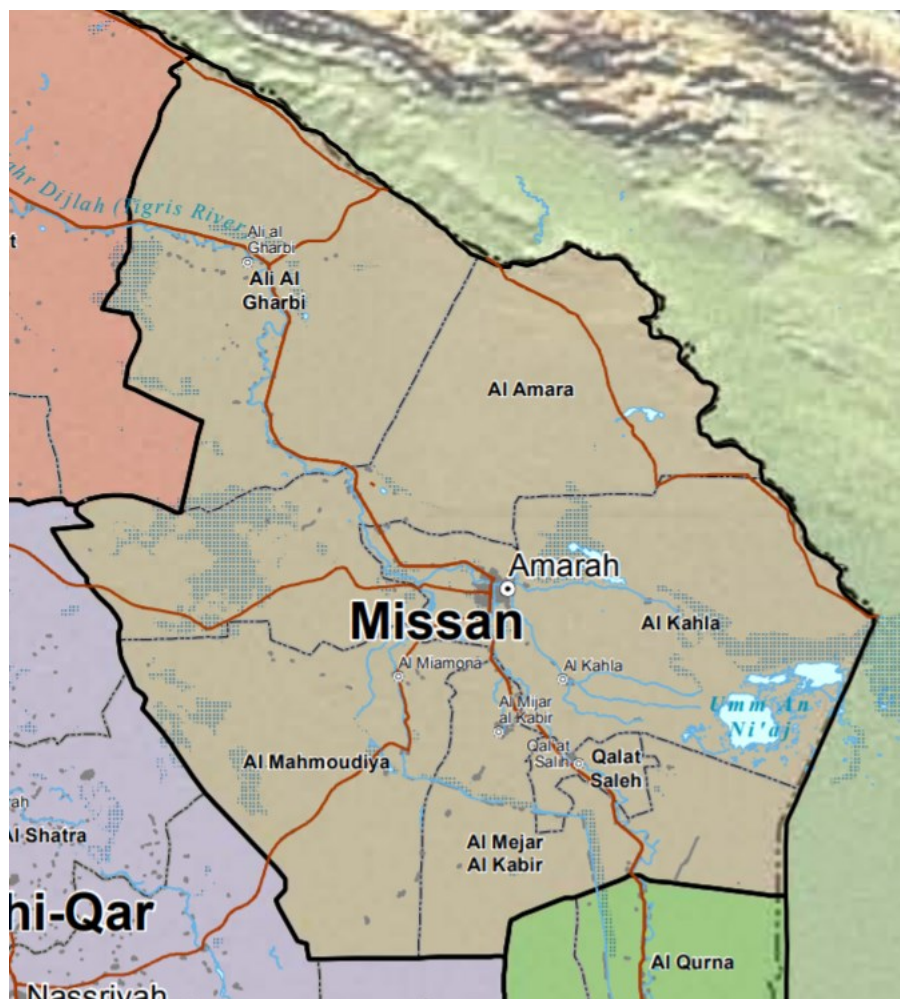
¹¹⁴⁹ Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 61

¹¹⁵⁰ Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

¹¹⁵¹ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁵² IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

2.13. Missan



Map 14: Missan governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.¹¹⁵³

General description of governorate

Missan (Maysan) governorate is located in southeast Iraq and has borders with Wassit, Basrah, and Thi-Qar governorates, as well as with Iran to the east. The governorate is divided into six districts: Ali Al-Gharbi, Al-Mijar Al-Kabir (Al Mejar Al Kabir), Al-Maimouna, Al-Kahla, Amarah (Al Amara), and Qal'at Salih (Qalat Saleh). The capital is Amarah.¹¹⁵⁴

For 2022, the Iraqi CSO estimated the governorate's population at 1 233 053.¹¹⁵⁵

¹¹⁵³ UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁴ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Maysan Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁵ Iraq, CSO, *المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني* [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8

The vast majority of Missan's population is composed of Shia Arabs. Missan is also home to a Sunni minority, as well as small communities of Christians and Mandeans.¹¹⁵⁶ Moreover, Faily Kurdish communities¹¹⁵⁷ and Black Iraqis reportedly existed in Missan governorate.¹¹⁵⁸

For further information on the ethno-religious composition and economy in Missan, please refer to section 2.13 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Armed actors' presence and control

For information on the conflict background, please refer to section 2.13.2 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

In the reference period, the ISF was present in Missan governorate¹¹⁵⁹ and, according to a February 2024 US Department of Defence (USDOD) report, the Missan Operation Command of the ISF had its headquarters in Amarah.¹¹⁶⁰

Furthermore, local sources indicated the presence of PMF in Missan governorate.¹¹⁶¹ Other Shiite political forces with armed militias, such as the rival groups of Muqtada Al-Sadr and the Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq (AAH), were present in Missan and other southern Iraqi governorates, where they maintained their strongholds. The Sadr movement, although weakened by opposing forces such as AAH, reportedly still maintained control over some areas and economic sectors in Missan governorate, particularly the health sector.¹¹⁶²

Recent security trends

In February 2024, tensions between the Sadr movement and AAH escalated in Missan, resulting in armed clashes. The escalation was provoked by the killing of Naji al-Kaabi, a senior AAH member, by unidentified armed men in Missan governorate,¹¹⁶³ which, according to an Al-Arab article, was attributed to the Sadr movement.¹¹⁶⁴

¹¹⁵⁶ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁷ UNHCR, Statelessness and Risks of Statelessness in Iraq: Faily Kurd and Bidoon Communities, September 2022, [url](#), p. 10

¹¹⁵⁸ Atlantic Council, Black Iraqis have been invisible for a long time. Their vibrant culture and struggle must be recognized., 24 March 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁹ France, OFPRA, Irak: Veille sécuritaire du 1er juillet 2022 au 30 juin 2023 [Iraq: Security monitoring, 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023], 20 September 2023, [url](#), p. 11

¹¹⁶⁰ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 19

¹¹⁶¹ NINA, الحشد الشعبي .. القبض على أحد المروجين لحزب البعث المنحل في محافظة ميسان [The Popular Mobilization Forces arrested a person promoting the dissolved Baath Party in Missan governorate], 4 February 2024, [url](#); Al-Mirbad, PMU commemorate 'leaders of victory' in Missan in celebration of achievements of martyrs], 3 January 2024, [url](#); Al-Mirbad, الهيئة الحشد في ميسان تنظم وقفة ضد الأوضاع الراهنة [PMU in Missan organize a protest against current situation in Gaza], 20 October 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁶² Al-Arab, الأمن في مدن عراقية رهين حالة العداء بين مقتدى الصدر وقيس الخزعلي [The security in Iraqi cities depends on hostilities between Muqtada Al-Sadr and Qais Al-Khazali], 6 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁶³ Sky News Arabia, اغتيال قيادي بارز في ميليشيا "عصائب أهل الحق" بالعراق [Prominent leader of Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq militia killed], 4 February 2024, [url](#); Shafaq News, Assassination of senior Asaib Ahl al-Haq leader in Maysan, 4 February 2024, [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: February 1 – 8, 2024, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁶⁴ Al-Arab, الأمن في مدن عراقية رهين حالة العداء بين مقتدى الصدر وقيس الخزعلي [The security in Iraqi cities depends on hostilities between Muqtada Al-Sadr and Qais Al-Khazali], 6 February 2024, [url](#)

Sources also reported tribal clashes in Missan governorate.¹¹⁶⁵ According to Middle East based researcher and analyst Haley Bobseine, who was consulted for an April 2023 EUAA report, Missan was one of the Iraqi governorates with the highest number of tribal disputes.¹¹⁶⁶ Water shortages have reportedly led to conflicts between tribes living in the border regions of Missan and Wassit governorates, leading to violent clashes in the past.¹¹⁶⁷ According to a police officer in the governorate cited in an August 2023 Al-Araby Al-Jadeed article, clan conflicts have been a major issue for the governorate.¹¹⁶⁸

Moreover, in the reference period, a number of attacks carried out by unidentified perpetrators on civilians and individuals of certain profiles or on their houses¹¹⁶⁹, including teachers,¹¹⁷⁰ a private security agent,¹¹⁷¹ a hospital director,¹¹⁷² government officials,¹¹⁷³ a member of parliament,¹¹⁷⁴ and a former member of parliament,¹¹⁷⁵ were reported in Missan governorate.

Furthermore, sources indicated that drug criminality, including clashes between ISF and drug traffickers, was an issue in Missan governorate.¹¹⁷⁶ ISF carried out a number of operations

¹¹⁶⁵ Shafaq News, [مقتل شيخ عشيرة في نزاع جنوبي العراق](#) [One person killed and two injured in 'violent' tribal clash in Missan governorate], 18 June 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, [مقتل شيخ عشيرة في نزاع جنوبي العراق](#) [Tribal leader killed in conflict in southern Iraq], 18 August 2023, [url](#); INA, [شرطة ميسان تعقد مؤتمرا أمنيا للحد من النزاعات العشائرية](#) [Missan Police holds security conference to reduce tribal conflicts], 22 October 2023, [url](#); Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, [العراق: تهديدات عشائرية تلاحق الأطباء](#) [Iraq: Tribal threats haunt doctors], 25 August 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁶⁶ EUAA, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law [comment made by Middle East based researcher and analyst Haley Bobseine, who was consulted for the report], April 2023, [url](#), p. 82

¹¹⁶⁷ E-International Relations, Water Scarcity and Environmental Peacebuilding: A Lens on Southern Iraq, 18 May 2023, [url](#), p. 2

¹¹⁶⁸ Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, [العراق: تهديدات عشائرية تلاحق الأطباء](#) [Iraq: Tribal threats haunt doctors], 25 August 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁶⁹ Shafaq News, [استهداف منزل نائب سابق بمحافظة ميسان](#) [Targeting home of former member of parliament in Missan governorate], 9 February 2024, [url](#); Shafaq News, 6 February 2024, [استهداف منزل موظف حكومي بديوان محافظة ميسان](#) [Targeting of government official's house in Missan governorate with explosive device: video], 6 February 2024, [url](#); Shafaq News, [مسلمون يهاجمون منزل مدير مستشفى في ميسان](#) [Predecessor accused: Armed men attack home of hospital director in Missan], 29 January 2024, [url](#); Shafaq News, [هجوم على ميسان](#) [Attack on Maysan governor's residence in southern Iraq raises security concerns], 7 October 2023, [url](#); Elbalad, [انفجار.. العراق](#) [Detonation of explosive device in Missan governorate], 10 February 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁰ Al-Mirbad, [معلمون يهاجمون سيارات مدرسين في العمارة لإطلاق نار من قبل مجهولين](#) [Unknown gunmen attack cars of teachers in Amarah], 19 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁷¹ Al-Mirbad, [مواطن يعمل حارسا بملوذة أهلية](#) [Civilian working as security agent for private electric generator killed], 13 May 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁷² Shafaq News, [مسلمون يهاجمون منزل مدير مستشفى في ميسان](#) [Predecessor accused: Armed men attack home of hospital director in Missan], 29 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁷³ Shafaq News, 6 February 2024, [استهداف منزل موظف حكومي بديوان محافظة ميسان بعربة ناسفة.. فيديو](#) [Targeting of government official's house in Missan governorate with explosive device: video], 6 February 2024, [url](#); Shafaq News, [هجوم على ميسان](#) [Attack on Maysan governor's residence in southern Iraq raises security concerns], 7 October 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁴ NINA, [محاولة اغتيال في العمارة](#) [Assassination attempt of member of parliament in Amarah city], 5 February 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁵ Shafaq News, [استهداف منزل نائب سابق بمحافظة ميسان](#) [Targeting home of former member of parliament in Missan governorate], 9 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁶ Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [Algemeen ambtsbericht Irak](#) [Country report Iraq], November 2023, [url](#), p. 17; Al-Sharqiya, [اشتباكات في ميسان مع تجار مخدرات](#) [Clashes in Missan with drug traffickers], 12 February 2024, [url](#); Baghdad Today, [قوة أمنية تضبط 4 كغم من المخدرات بعد اشتباك مع تجارها في ميسان](#) [Security force seizes 4 kilogram of drugs in Missan after clash with drug traffickers], 11 February 2024, [url](#); Al-Sumaria, [بعد اشتباك مسلح.. الإطاحة بشبكة لتجارة المخدرات في ميسان](#) [After an armed clash, a drug trafficking network was overthrown in Missan], 19 January 2024, [url](#); INA, [مقتل أحد أخطر المتهمين بتجارة المخدرات بعد الاشتباك معه في ميسان](#) [After clashes in Missan, most dangerous men accused of drug trafficking killed], 28 July 2023, [url](#); Baghdad Today, [القبض على 3 متهمين "أساسيين"](#) [Arrest of 3 'main' suspects of drug trafficking in Missan], 20 March 2023, [url](#)

against organised crime groups in the areas of drugs and smuggling, as well as against unidentified tribal groups.¹¹⁷⁷

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 130 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Missan governorate, of which 50 were coded as battles, 10 explosions/remote violence, and 70 incidents of violence against civilians.¹¹⁷⁸ The majority of security incidents were documented in Al Kahla district. According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups were involved in the majority of events coded as explosions/remote violence, and violence against civilians. Tribal militias were the most encountered actor in events coded as battles.

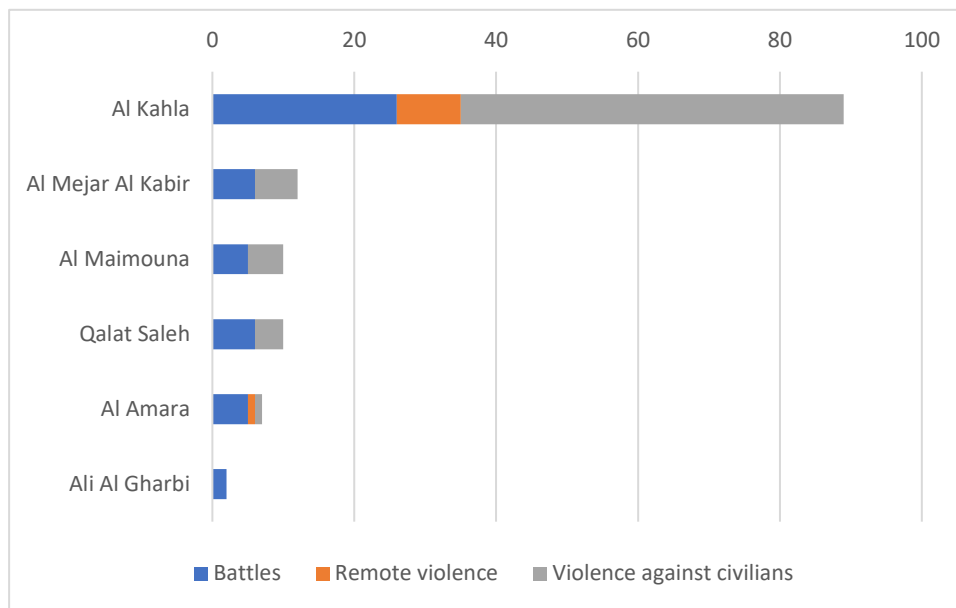


Figure 32. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Missan governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP did not record any events resulting in fatalities in Missan governorate.¹¹⁷⁹

¹¹⁷⁷ France, OFPRA, Irak: Veille sécuritaire du 1er juillet 2022 au 30 juin 2023 [Iraq: Security monitoring, 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023], 20 September 2023, [url](#), p. 11

¹¹⁷⁸ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁹ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024



Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 1 civilian casualty in Missan governorate.¹¹⁸⁰ For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Missan governorate.¹¹⁸¹

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

Information on conflict-related infrastructure damage in the reference period could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

As of the end of 2022, around 955 962 square metres of Missan governorate's area were reported to be cluster munition-contaminated.¹¹⁸² In August 2023 and September 2023, two cases of civilians killed by landmine explosions were reported in the border area of Missan governorate.¹¹⁸³ Further relevant information on explosive remnants of war could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

Conflict-induced displacement and return

As of December 2023, IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)¹¹⁸⁴ did not document any displacement from Missan governorate to other parts of the country or within Missan governorate.¹¹⁸⁵

As of December 2023, IOM has not documented any returns to Missan governorate.¹¹⁸⁶

¹¹⁸⁰ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

¹¹⁸¹ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

¹¹⁸² Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 61

¹¹⁸³ NINA, مصرع شاب بإنفجار لغم ارضي في منطقة حدودية بميسان [Young man killed in landmine explosion in border area of Missan], 22 August 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, Afghan visitor killed by landmine in Maysan, 3 September 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁴ Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

¹¹⁸⁵ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁶ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)



2.14. Muthanna



Map 15: Basrah governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.¹¹⁸⁷

General description of governorate

Muthanna (Al-Muthanna) governorate is located in south-western Iraq and has borders with Najaf, Qadissiya, Thi-Qar, and Basrah governorates and an international border with Saudi Arabia.¹¹⁸⁸ It is the country's second largest governorate and mostly consists of desert and dry land.¹¹⁸⁹ The governorate is divided into four districts: Al-Samawa (Samawa, Samawah), Al-Khidhir (Al-Khithir), Al-Rumaitha, and Al-Salman. The capital of Muthanna is the town of Al-Samawa in the governorate's north.¹¹⁹⁰

¹¹⁸⁷ UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁸ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Muthanna Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁹ UNICEF, WASHing back hope for the people of southern Iraq, 18 April 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁰ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Muthanna Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)



For 2022, the Iraqi CSO estimated the governorate's population at 902 480.¹¹⁹¹ The northern areas around the Euphrates River are more densely populated than the desert districts in the governorate's south.¹¹⁹²

The majority of Muthanna's inhabitants are Shia Arabs.¹¹⁹³ Bidoon communities reportedly existed in Muthanna governorate.¹¹⁹⁴ For further information on the ethno-religious composition and economy in Muthanna, please refer to section 2.14 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Armed actors' presence and control

For information on the conflict background, please refer to section 2.14.2 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

As of July 2023, EPIC reported that there was some competition around dominance between Shiite groups in the otherwise rather peaceful Muthanna governorate.¹¹⁹⁵

In early 2023, the Iraqi Army transferred security authority/duties in Muthanna governorate to the police.¹¹⁹⁶ Moreover, sources indicated a PMF presence in Muthanna governorate.¹¹⁹⁷

Recent security trends

The Muthanna police command in February 2024 was reported as saying that the governorate had a stable security situation.¹¹⁹⁸ According to EPIC, hostilities between Shia groups and militias, including the Sadr movement and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), which had been created after Saddam Hussein was overthrown, had calmed down and 'peace returned' in Muthanna governorate in recent years. Muthanna was not affected by the ISIL incursion and, according to EPIC, is 'one of the safest' Iraqi governorates.¹¹⁹⁹

In a May 2023 report, the UN Secretary-General reported on continued attacks, in the first half of 2023, on Iraqi contracted convoys transporting supplies for the international coalition against ISIL. The attacks targeted a number of governorates, including Muthanna, however, causing no casualties. The attacks, which were carried out by the International Resistance and

¹¹⁹¹ Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8

¹¹⁹² EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁹³ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁴ UNHCR, Statelessness and Risks of Statelessness in Iraq: Faili Kurd and Bidoon Communities, September 2022, [url](#), p. 23; Stateless Journey, Statelessness in Iraq, November 2019, [url](#), p. 2

¹¹⁹⁵ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁶ New Arab (The), Transfer of security responsibilities from Iraq's army to local police stalled by challenges, 18 September 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁷ Al-Mirbad, هيئة الحشد الشعبي في المثنى تستعد لتفويج 90 حاجا وحاجة [PMU in Muthanna starts preparations for sending 90 men and women to pilgrimage], 23 May 2023, [url](#); NINA, "الحركة المولوية" في [Iraq's PMU starts palm tree planting project in desert area bordering Saudi-Arabia and Kuwait (edited)], 22 March 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁸ Al-Mirbad, المحافظة تشهد حالة من الاستقرار الأمني [Muthanna Police Command: Governorate witnesses stable security situation], 18 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁹ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)



the group Revenge for Muhandis, resumed in January 2023 for the first time since August 2022.¹²⁰⁰ Water shortages have reportedly led to conflicts between tribes in Muthanna,¹²⁰¹ as well as between tribes in Muthanna and Thi-Qar governorate and Muthanna and Al-Qadisiya governorate.¹²⁰²

Moreover, sources indicated that drug criminality was an issue in Muthanna governorate in the reference period.¹²⁰³

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 26 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Muthanna governorate, of which 18 were coded as battles, 3 explosions/remote violence, and 5 incidents of violence against civilians.¹²⁰⁴ The majority of security incidents were documented in Al Samawa district. According to ACLED data, ISF forces and smugglers (coded as either 'Actor1' or 'Actor2') were involved in the majority of events coded as battles.

¹²⁰⁰ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 17

¹²⁰¹ Al-Quds Al-Arabi, المثنى العراقية: الجفاف يُنذر بنزوح جماعي وصراع عشائري على المياه [Iraq's Al-Muthanna governorate: Drought heralds mass displacement and tribal conflict over water resources], 3 October 2023, [url](#); Jummar, 'There is little water left': Tribes of Al-Muthanna Fight over Groundwater, 16 July 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁰² E-International Relations, Water Scarcity and Environmental Peacebuilding: A Lens on Southern Iraq, 18 May 2023, [url](#), p. 2

¹²⁰³ INA, المثنى, وكالة الاستخبارات: القبض على تاجر مخدرات في المثنى [Intelligence Agency: Drug dealer was captured in Muthanna], 15 January 2024, [url](#); Baghdad Today, المثنى القبض على أفرادها في المثنى [Drug trafficking network dismantled and member arrested in Muthanna], 14 November 2023, [url](#); NINA, الاستخبارات تطيح بثلاثة من تجار ومروجي المخدرات في محافظتي المثنى والنجف [Intelligence catches three drug dealers and traffickers in Najaf and Muthanna governorates], 2 October 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, Iraq busts captagon lab in Muthanna, 16 July 2023, [url](#); NINA, القبض على ثلاثة تجار مخدرات بحوزتهم (5) كيلو غرامات من مادة الكريستال في محافظة المثنى [Three drug dealers arrested in possession of 5 kilogram of crystal in Muthanna governorate], 9 May 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁴ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

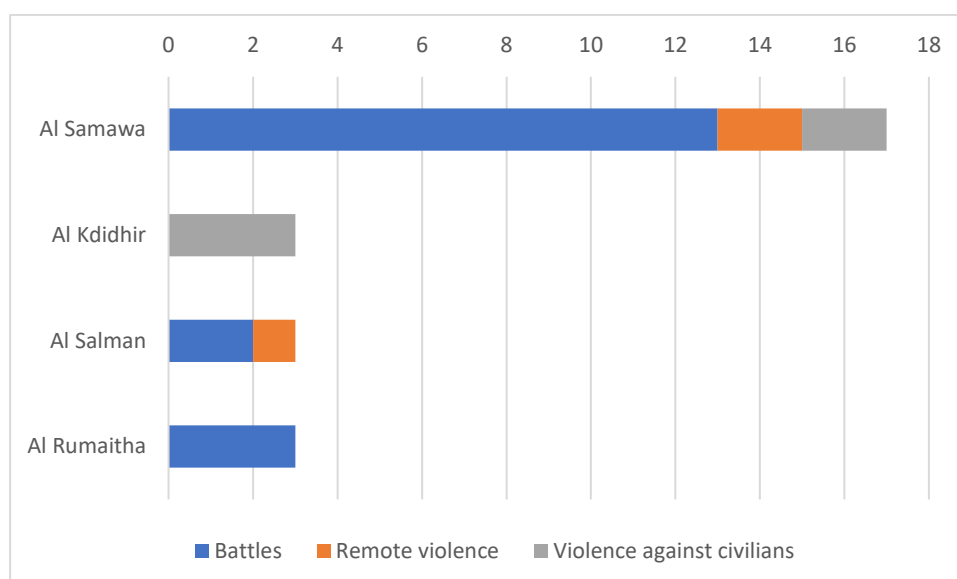


Figure 33. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Muthanna governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP did not record any events resulting in fatalities in Muthanna governorate.¹²⁰⁵

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 5 civilian casualties in Muthanna governorate.¹²⁰⁶ Between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Muthanna governorate.¹²⁰⁷

¹²⁰⁵ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

¹²⁰⁶ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

¹²⁰⁷ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

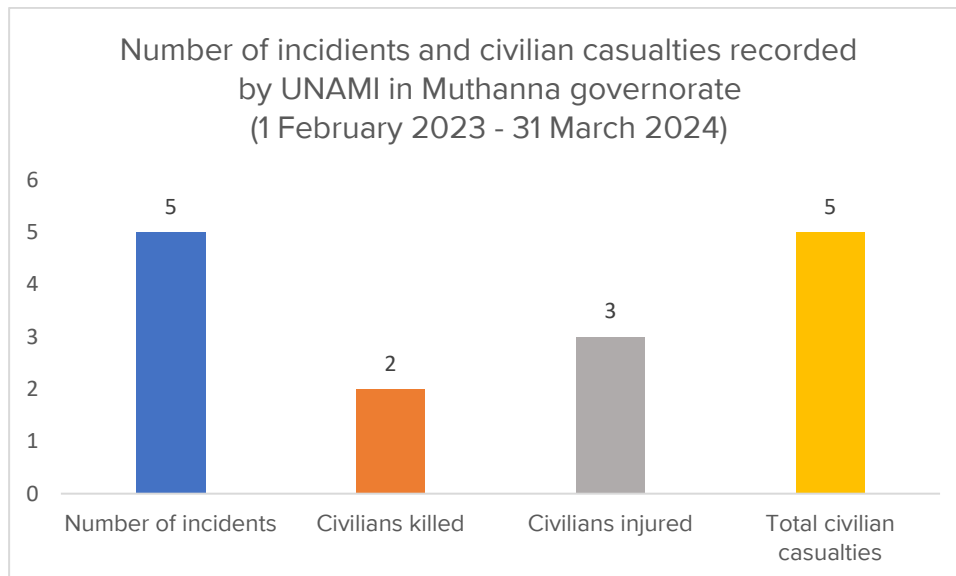


Figure 34. Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI in Muthanna governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.¹²⁰⁸

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

As of the end of 2022, around 81 790 909 square metres of Muthanna governorate's area were reported to be cluster munition-contaminated.¹²⁰⁹ According to the 2023 Mine Action Review, Muthanna was one of the three most cluster munition contaminated governorates in Iraq.¹²¹⁰ Further relevant information on explosive remnants of war could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

Conflict-induced displacement and return

As of December 2023, IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)¹²¹¹ did not document any displacement from Muthanna governorate to other parts of the country or within Muthanna governorate.¹²¹²

As of December 2023, IOM had not documented any returns to Muthanna governorate.¹²¹³

¹²⁰⁸ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

¹²⁰⁹ Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 61

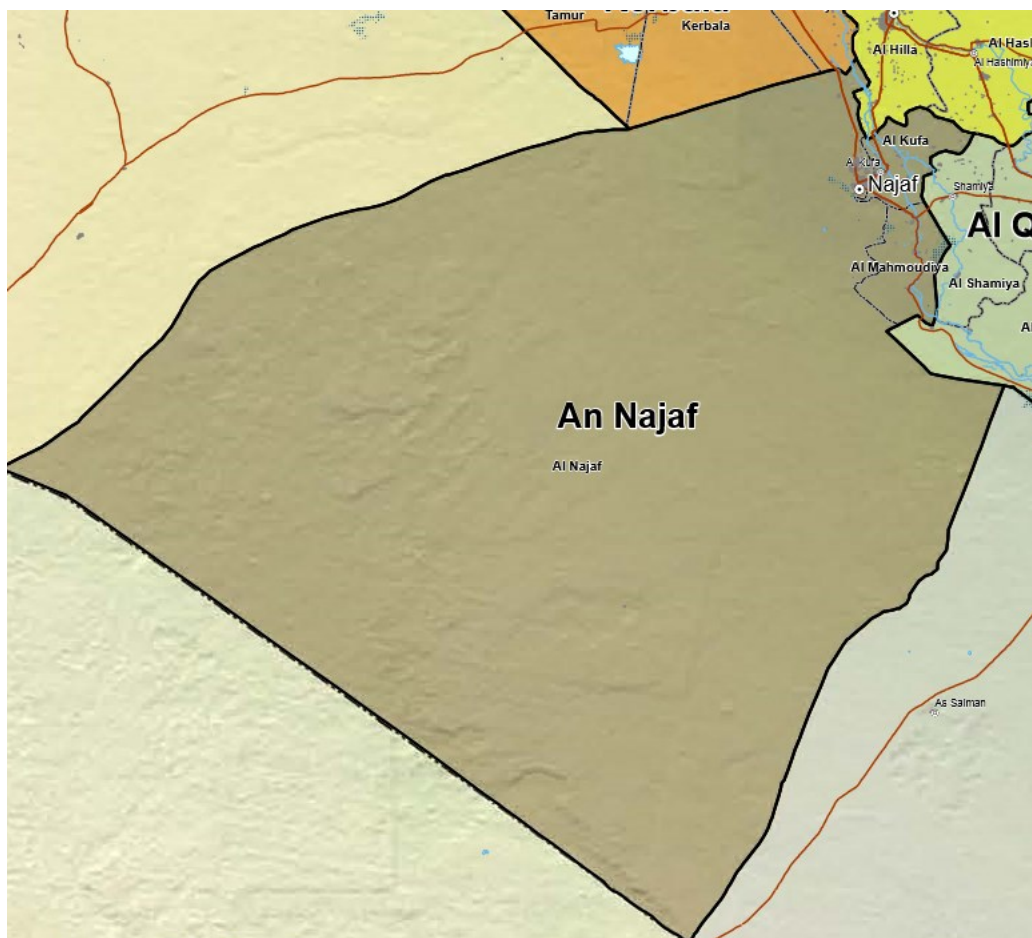
¹²¹⁰ Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023, 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 66

¹²¹¹ Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

¹²¹² IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

¹²¹³ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

2.15. Najaf



Map 16: Najaf governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.¹²¹⁴

General description of governorate

Najaf (Al-Najaf, An-Najaf) governorate is located in the southwest of Iraq. It has internal borders with the governorates of Anbar, Babil, Kerbala, Qadissiya, and Muthanna and shares an international border with Saudi Arabia to the south.¹²¹⁵ It is divided into the following districts: Al-Najaf, Al-Kufa, and Al-Manathira.¹²¹⁶ The governorate's capital is Najaf city, and the other major city in the governorate is Al-Kufa. Both cities – along with Karbala city – are considered important holy sites among Shia Muslims.¹²¹⁷

¹²¹⁴ UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, [url](#)

¹²¹⁵ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Al-Najaf Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

¹²¹⁶ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Al-Najaf District Reference Map 2020, 15 July 2020, [url](#); UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Al-Najaf Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

¹²¹⁷ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

The governorate's population in 2022 was estimated at 1 630 807¹²¹⁸ and the majority of its inhabitants are Shia Arab.¹²¹⁹

For further information on the governorate's ethno-religious composition as well as its economy, please refer to section 2.15.1 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Armed actors' presence and control

For information on the governorate's conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to sections 2.15.2 and 2.15.3 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

As of the end of 2023, Najaf did not have a provincial operations command of its own.¹²²⁰ In 2023, the security responsibilities for the governorate were transferred from the Iraqi Army to the local police.¹²²¹ Apart from the Najaf Police Command,¹²²² security actors operating in the governorate included the Najaf Intelligence and Security Directorate¹²²³ and PMF units such as the Abbas Combat Division¹²²⁴ (26th PMF Brigade)¹²²⁵ and the 2nd PMF Brigade.¹²²⁶

Recent security trends

The governorate has been described as 'relatively peaceful' in recent years.¹²²⁷ During the reference period, it witnessed armed attacks on several offices of the Dawa party by supporters of the Sadrist Movement (mid-July 2023)¹²²⁸ and unidentified militants (early December 2023),¹²²⁹ as well as an attack on an AAH office in Najaf city amid rising tensions between Muqtada al-Sadr and rival militias in February 2024, with no reported casualties.¹²³⁰

Moreover, the day of the provincial council elections¹²³¹ on 18 December 2023, unidentified individuals attacked three¹²³² or four¹²³³ voting centres in Najaf city and Al-Kufa with IEDs and

¹²¹⁸ Iraq, CSO, [الباب الثاني 2022-2023 الإحصائية المجموعة](#) [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8

¹²¹⁹ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

¹²²⁰ USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url](#), p. 19

¹²²¹ New Arab (The), Transfer of security responsibilities from Iraq's army to local police stalled by challenges, 18 September 2023, [url](#)

¹²²² NINA, A force from the Popular Mobilization Forces carries out a security operation in the Najaf desert, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²²³ NINA, Three drug dealers arrested with a kilogram of crystal in Najaf, 2 March 2024

¹²²⁴ Salami, M., The Role of Militias in Iraq: Evaluating their Impact and Strategies for Mitigation, CFRI, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

¹²²⁵ TWI, How the United States Should View Iraq's Shrine Militias, 5 February 2021, [url](#)

¹²²⁶ NINA, A force from the Popular Mobilization Forces carries out a security operation in the Najaf desert, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²²⁷ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

¹²²⁸ EPIC, ISHM: July 13 – 20, 2023, 20 July 2023, [url](#)

¹²²⁹ EPIC, ISHM: November 30 – December 7, 2023, 7 December 2023, [url](#)

¹²³⁰ EPIC, ISHM: February 15 – 22, 2024, 22 February 2024, [url](#)

¹²³¹ Çalışkan, S., 2023 Iraqi Provincial Elections: Analyzing Mosul's Political Landscape, TWI, 28 December 2023, [url](#)

¹²³² ISW and CTP, Iran Update, December 18, 2023, 18 December 2023, [url](#)

¹²³³ EPIC, ISHM: December 14 – 28, 2023, 28 December 2023, [url](#)



grenades,¹²³⁴ with none of the attacks resulting in human casualties.¹²³⁵ Najaf city also witnessed several attacks by unidentified perpetrators that targeted civilians, including an IED attack on a civilian vehicle,¹²³⁶ a grenade thrown at a house that resulted in several civilians being injured,¹²³⁷ and a gun attack on an individual who had only just been released from police detention, leaving him severely injured.¹²³⁸ Meanwhile, an armed clash between two tribes in Al-Haydariyah subdistrict left a young girl injured.¹²³⁹

A number of alleged drug dealers were arrested in anti-drug trafficking operations carried out by the Najaf Intelligence and Security Directorate,¹²⁴⁰ while the 2nd PMF Brigade and the Najaf Police Command conducted at least two ‘pre-emptive’ security operations in the desert sector of the governorate.¹²⁴¹

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 30 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Najaf governorate, of which 14 were coded as battles, 8 explosions/remote violence, and 8 incidents of violence against civilians.¹²⁴² The majority of security incidents were documented in Al Najaf district. According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups were involved in the majority of events coded as explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians.

¹²³⁴ EPIC, ISHM: December 14 – 28, 2023, 28 December 2023, [url](#); ISW and CTP, Iran Update, December 18, 2023, 18 December 2023, [url](#)

¹²³⁵ EPIC, ISHM: December 14 – 28, 2023, 28 December 2023, [url](#)

¹²³⁶ EPIC, ISHM: June 22 – July 6, 2023, 6 July 2023, [url](#)

¹²³⁷ EPIC, ISHM: June 15 – 22, 2023, 22 June 2023, [url](#)

¹²³⁸ Shafaq News, Unknown assailants attack a detainee released on bail outside a police station in Najaf, 9 March 2023, [url](#)

¹²³⁹ EPIC, ISHM: December 7 – 14, 2023, 14 December 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁴⁰ NINA, Three drug dealers arrested with a kilogram of crystal in Najaf, 2 March 2024; NINA, Intelligence Directorate arrested a dangerous terrorist and six drug dealers in Babylon and Najaf, 28 January 2024, [url](#); NINA, Four drug traffickers arrested in the provinces of Baghdad and Najaf, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁴¹ NINA, A force from the Popular Mobilization Forces carries out a security operation in the Najaf desert, 12 January 2024, [url](#); NINA, A Joint Force Carries Out A Preemptive Operation In The Desert Of Najaf, 19 May 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁴² EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)



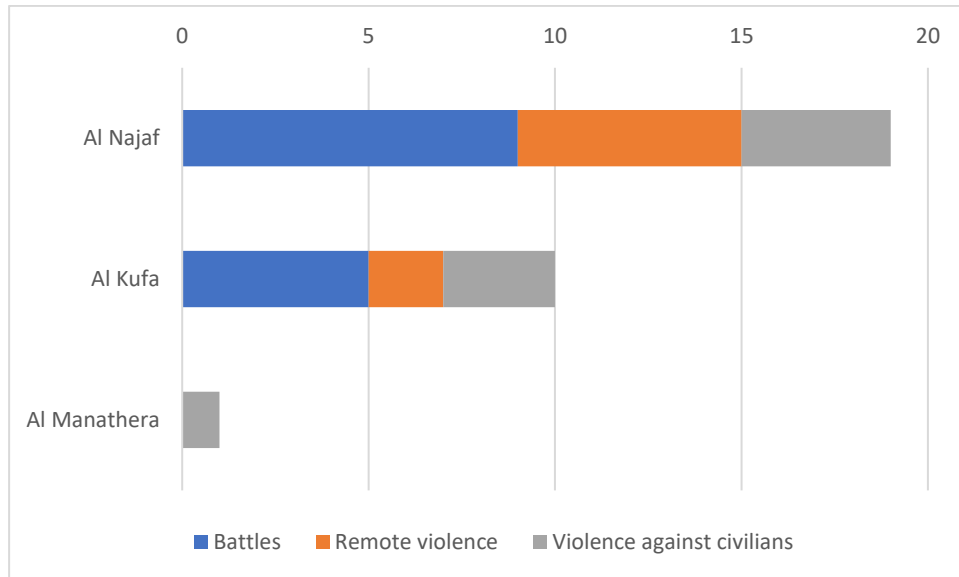


Figure 35. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Najaf governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP did not record any events resulting in fatalities in Najaf governorate.¹²⁴³

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 6 civilian casualties in Najaf governorate.¹²⁴⁴

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Najaf governorate.¹²⁴⁵

¹²⁴³ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

¹²⁴⁴ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

¹²⁴⁵ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

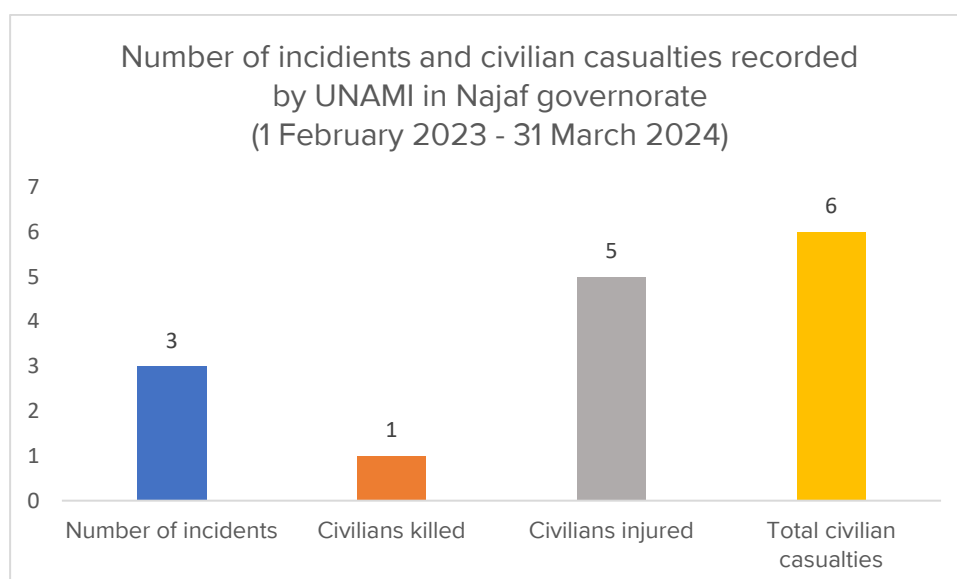


Figure 36. Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI in Najaf governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.¹²⁴⁶

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

No information on new conflict-related infrastructure damage occurring in the reference period could be found within the time constraints of this report. As of the end of 2022, the Mine Action Review estimated the area contaminated with cluster munitions at 3 700 442 square metres.¹²⁴⁷ Several civilians were killed or injured by explosive remnants in the Al-Askari neighbourhood of Najaf city¹²⁴⁸ and in the Al-Shabaka area near the Iraqi-Saudi border.¹²⁴⁹

Conflict-induced displacement and return

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)¹²⁵⁰ statistics as of December 2023 did not record any IDPs originating from Najaf¹²⁵¹ or returnees living in the governorate.¹²⁵²

¹²⁴⁶ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

¹²⁴⁷ Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 61

¹²⁴⁸ EPIC, ISHM: April 13 – 20, 2023, 20 April 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁴⁹ NINA, A child injured by a war projectile explosion, west of Najaf, 1 February 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁰ Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

¹²⁵¹ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁵² IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

2.16. Qadissiya



Map 17: Qadissiya governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.¹²⁵³

General description of governorate

Qadissiya governorate, officially Diwaniya governorate,¹²⁵⁴ was renamed ‘Qadissiya’ (Qadisiyah) in 1976 before this decision was reverted in 2008.¹²⁵⁵ However, the name Qadissiya is still used, including by the authorities.¹²⁵⁶ The governorate is located in southern central Iraq and has borders with Babil, Wassit, Thi-Qar, Muthanna, and Najaf governorates. It is divided into the following districts: Diwaniya (Al Diwaniya), Afak (Afaq), Shamiya (Al-Shamiya), and Al-Hamza. The capital city is Diwaniya.¹²⁵⁷

¹²⁵³ UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁴ Iraq, Diwaniya Governorate [main page], n.d., [url](#)

¹²⁵⁵ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁶ University of Al-Qadisiyah, Main Page, n. d., [url](#); Iraq, CSO, 2018 الموجز الإحصائي القادسي [Statistical Summary Al-Qadissiya 2018], n.d., [url](#); Iraq, Rasheed Bank, فروع المصرف في محافظة القادسية [Bank branches in Qadissiya governorate], n.d., [url](#)

¹²⁵⁷ UNOCHA and IMMAP, Iraq: Al-Qadissiya Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

For 2022, the Iraqi Central Statistical Organization (CSO) estimated the governorate's population at 1 430 714.¹²⁵⁸

The majority of Qadissiya governorate's inhabitants are Shia Arabs.¹²⁵⁹ Roma live in isolated villages in the governorate.¹²⁶⁰ Moreover, Bidoon communities reportedly existed in the governorate.¹²⁶¹ For further information on the governorate's ethno-religious composition and economy, please refer to section 2.16.1 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Armed actors' presence and control

For information on the conflict background and the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to section 2.16.2 and 2.16.3 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

In September 2022, the PMF carried out raids in the southern governorates, including Qadissiya, arresting a number of individuals with alleged ties to various groups, including the Baath party and the Tishreen movement.¹²⁶² In July 2023, the PMF raided the local premises of the Iraqi journalist syndicate in Qadissiya, prompting wide condemnation by journalists, as well as on social media.¹²⁶³

Armed groups, including the Ashab Al-Kahf,¹²⁶⁴ were also reported to be active in the governorate during the reporting period.¹²⁶⁵

According to the CEO of Peace Paradigms, Haidar Al-Ibrahimi, an expert on peacebuilding and tribal reconciliation who was interviewed by EUAA for an April 2023 report on tribes in Iraq, tribes in southern Iraq, including in Qadissiya, 'are heavily polarized and supported by key armed actors and have become a key competitor to state's security institutions'.¹²⁶⁶

Further information on the presence and areas of control of armed actors in Qadissiya governorate in the reference period could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

¹²⁵⁸ Iraq, CSO, [المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني](#) [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8

¹²⁵⁹ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁶⁰ MRG, Roma: Profile, last updated November 2017, [url](#); RID, Working Paper No. 9 - Roma in Iraq and Syria On the Margins of IDP Protection, December 2021, [url](#), pp. 5, 9

¹²⁶¹ UNHCR, Statelessness and Risks of Statelessness in Iraq: Faili Kurd and Bidoon Communities, September 2022, [url](#), p. 23; Stateless Journey, Statelessness in Iraq, November 2019, [url](#), p. 2

¹²⁶² Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, Iraq: the PMF state "الحشد الشعبي" دولة [العراق: دولة "الحشد الشعبي"], 19 September 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁶³ Al-Arab, The Popular Mobilization Forces occupy Journalist's Syndicate in Diwaniya [الحشد الشعبي يحتل نقابة الصحفيين في الديوانية], 13 July 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁶⁴ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 25

¹²⁶⁵ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 20; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 25; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 17

¹²⁶⁶ EUAA, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#), p. 83

Recent security trends

According to reports of the UN Secretary-General, several attacks on convoys of 'Iraqi companies contracted to carry supplies for the international counter-Da'esh [ISIL] coalition' were reported in a number of governorates, including Qadissiya, in 2023, causing no casualties.¹²⁶⁷ The attacks, which were carried out by Ashab Al-Kahf,¹²⁶⁸ the International Resistance, and the group Revenge for Muhandis,¹²⁶⁹ resumed in the first quarter of 2023 for the first time since August 2022.¹²⁷⁰

Water shortages have reportedly led to conflicts between tribes in Qadissiya and Muthanna governorates.¹²⁷¹

Further relevant information on recent security trends could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 20 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Qadissiya governorate, of which 11 were coded as battles, 6 explosions/remote violence, and 3 incidents of violence against civilians.¹²⁷² The majority of security incidents were documented in Al Diwaniya district. According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups and Iraqi police forces were involved in the majority of events coded as battles, and explosions/remote violence.

¹²⁶⁷ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 20; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 25; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 17

¹²⁶⁸ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 25

¹²⁶⁹ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 17

¹²⁷⁰ UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 17

¹²⁷¹ E-International Relations, Water Scarcity and Environmental Peacebuilding: A Lens on Southern Iraq, 18 May 2023, [url](#), p. 2

¹²⁷² EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

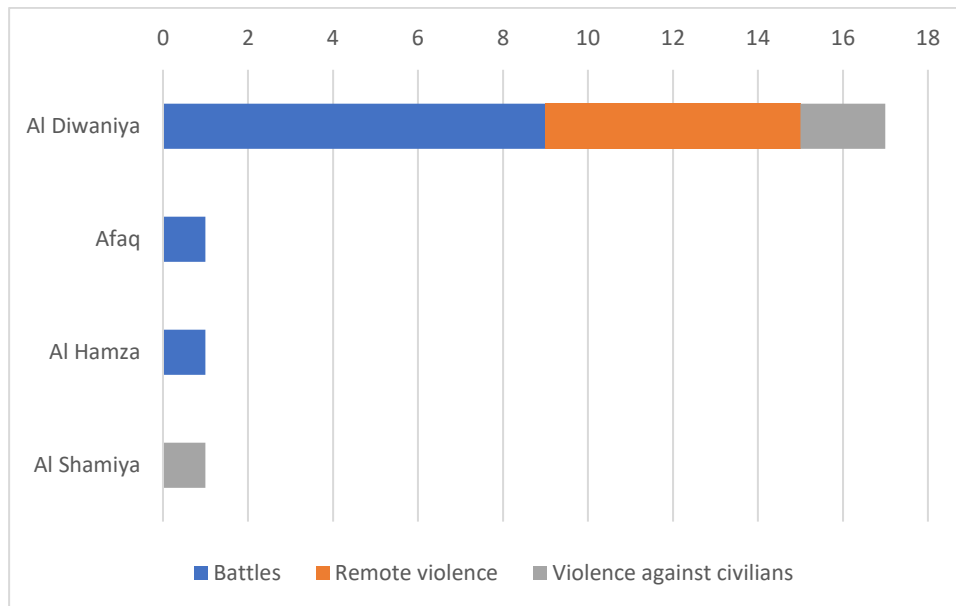


Figure 37. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Qadissiya governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP did not record any events resulting in fatalities in Qadissiya governorate.¹²⁷³

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 1 civilian casualty in Qadissiya governorate.¹²⁷⁴

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Qadissiya governorate.¹²⁷⁵

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

At the end of 2022, there were reportedly no cluster munition-contaminated areas in Qadissiya governorate.¹²⁷⁶ However, two cases of explosive remnants of war detonations were reported during the reference period, resulting in the death of a child and injuries to other civilians,¹²⁷⁷ one in the Umm Al-Abbassiyat neighbourhood in the Al-Shafi'iyah area¹²⁷⁸ and the

¹²⁷³ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

¹²⁷⁴ EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

¹²⁷⁵ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

¹²⁷⁶ Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 61

¹²⁷⁷ NINA, One child killed and five others injured by ERW explosion in Diwaniya [وفاة واصابة ٦ / اطفال بانفجار احد [المخلفات الحربية في الديوانية], 18 August 2023, [url](#); NINA, Young man injured by ERW explosion in Diwaniya [اصابة شاب [إبانفجار احد المخلفات الحربية القديمة في الديوانية], [url](#)

¹²⁷⁸ NINA, One child killed and five others injured by ERW explosion in Diwaniya [وفاة واصابة ٦ / اطفال بانفجار احد [المخلفات الحربية في الديوانية], 18 August 2023, [url](#)

other in the Al-Nouriya neighbourhood of the governorate.¹²⁷⁹ Further relevant information on explosive remnants of war could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

Conflict-induced displacement and return

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM),¹²⁸⁰ as of December 2023, did not document any displacements from Qadissiya governorate in other parts of the country or within Qadissiya governorate.¹²⁸¹

As of December 2023, no returns to Qadissiya governorate were documented by IOM.¹²⁸²

2.17. Thi-Qar



Map 18: Thi-Qar governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.¹²⁸³

General description of governorate

Thi-Qar (Dhi-Qar) governorate is located in southern Iraq and has borders with Wassit, Missan, Basrah, Muthanna, and Qadissiya governorates. The capital is Nasiriya (Nassriyah). The governorate is divided into five districts: Al-Jubayish (Al-Chibayish), Al-Nasiriya (Nassriyah), Al-Shatra, Suq Al-Shuyukh (Suq Al Shoyokh), and Al-Rifa'i (Al Rifai).¹²⁸⁴

¹²⁷⁹ NINA, Young man injured by ERW explosion in Diwaniya [إصابة شاب بانفجار احد المخلفات الحربية القديمة في الديوانية], [url](#)

¹²⁸⁰ Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

¹²⁸¹ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁸² IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁸³ UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, [url](#)

¹²⁸⁴ UNOCHA and IIMAP, Iraq: Thi-Qar Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

For 2022, the Iraqi Central Statistical Organization (CSO) estimated the governorate's population at 2 321 851.¹²⁸⁵

The majority of Thi-Qar's population is Shia Arab. There is also a Sunni minority and there are communities of Marsh Arabs, and small Assyrian, Chaldean Christian, and Mandaean communities.¹²⁸⁶ Moreover, there was a presence of Black Iraqis¹²⁸⁷ and Bidoon communities.¹²⁸⁸ For further information on the ethno-religious composition and economy in Thi-Qar, please refer to section 2.17.1 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Armed actors' presence and control

For information on the conflict background and the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to section 2.17.2 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Shiite political forces with armed militias such as the rival groups of Muqtada Al-Sadr's Saraya Al-Salam¹²⁸⁹ and the Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq (AAH) were present in Thi-Qar¹²⁹⁰ and other southern Iraqi governorates, where they maintained their strongholds.¹²⁹¹ The PMF's Kata'ib Sayyid Al-Shuhada (KSS) reportedly maintained an office in Suq Al-Shuyukh (Suq Al Shoyokh) district.¹²⁹² According to a January 2024 Shafaq News article, AAH previously had headquarters in the governorate's Al-Rifa'i (Al Rifai) district.¹²⁹³

The ISF were also present in Thi-Qar governorate.¹²⁹⁴ In February 2023, Al-Mirbad reported that the governorate's police command had started the implementation of a broad security plan in Al-Shatra district with the aim of establishing the rule of law in the face of tribal conflicts and armed clashes.¹²⁹⁵ In 2023, it was reported that the Iraqi army had transferred security responsibilities in Thi-Qar governorate to the police.¹²⁹⁶ In January 2024, Shafaq News

¹²⁸⁵ Iraq, CSO, *المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني* [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8

¹²⁸⁶ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁸⁷ Atlantic Council, Black Iraqis have been invisible for a long time. Their vibrant culture and struggle must be recognized, 24 March 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁸⁸ UNHCR, Statelessness and Risks of Statelessness in Iraq: Faili Kurd and Bidoon Communities, September 2022, [url](#), p. 11; Stateless Journey, Statelessness in Iraq, November 2019, [url](#), p. 2

¹²⁸⁹ Shafaq News, Saraya al-Salam Expels Two Members Over Disobedience in Dhi Qar, 11 May 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁹⁰ Shafaq News, *نشر سيطرات أمنية غير رسمية.. حصيلة جديدة لاشتباكات "العصائب والتيار" في ذي قار* [Deployment of unofficial security checks: new result of clashes between the Asa'ib and the Tayyar in Thi-Qar], 21 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁹¹ Al-Arab, *الأمن في مدن عراقية رهين حالة العداء بين مقتدى الصدر وقيس الخزعلي* [The security in Iraqi cities depends on hostilities between Muqtada Al-Sadr and Qais Al-Khazali], 6 February 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁹² Al-Mirbad, *كتائب سيد الشهداء تدين الاعتداء على مكتبها الخدمي في ذي قار* [Sayyid al-Shuhada Brigades condemn the attack on their service office in Thi-Qar], 29 February 2024, [url](#); Shafaq News, An RPG damages a PMF headquarters in Dhi Qar, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁹³ Shafaq News, *انفجار يستهدف مقراً سابقاً للعصائب جنوب العراق* [Explosion targets former Asa'ib headquarters in southern Iraq], 29 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁹⁴ Al-Mirbad, *تنفيذ خطة أمنية واسعة في قضاء الشرطة شمال ذي قار* [Implementation of broad security plan in Al-Shatra district, north of Thi-Qar], 17 February 2023, [url](#); Berghof Foundation, PPO, Climate change effects on conflict dynamics in Iraq: Study of Makhmur, Tal Afar, and Al-Rifai districts, 6 October 2023, [url](#), p. 23

¹²⁹⁵ Al-Mirbad, *تنفيذ خطة أمنية واسعة في قضاء الشرطة شمال ذي قار* [Implementation of broad security plan in Al-Shatra district, north of Thi-Qar], 17 February 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁹⁶ New Arab (The), Transfer of security responsibilities from Iraq's army to local police stalled by challenges, 18 September 2023, [url](#)

reported that the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior had announced that it would soon take over the security agenda in the governorate from the Ministry of Defence.¹²⁹⁷

According to the CEO of Peace Paradigms, Haidar Al-Ibrahimi, an expert on peacebuilding and tribal reconciliation who was interviewed by EUAA for an April 2023 report on tribes in Iraq, tribes in Thi-Qar and other parts of southern Iraq, 'have become a key competitor to state's security institutions' and 'are heavily polarized and supported by key armed actors'.¹²⁹⁸ In October 2023, the Berghof Foundation reported that tribal dynamics were salient in Al-Rifa'i (Al Rifai) district, where the tribes Bani Rikab and Al-Shuwaylat were the most prominent.¹²⁹⁹ According to a local official in Thi-Qar cited by Al-Araby Al-Jadeed in a May 2023 article, a significant number of persons involved in the governorate's tribal conflicts were affiliated with factions of the PMF.¹³⁰⁰

Recent security trends

In July 2023, EPIC reported that Thi-Qar, like much of Iraq's southern governorates, which were not affected by the ISIL incursion, was 'relatively safe'.¹³⁰¹

According to Middle East based researcher and analyst Haley Bobseine, who was consulted for an April 2023 EUAA report, there have been cases of temporary closure of schools as a result of tribal clashes because it could be dangerous for children to go to school or cross town.¹³⁰² Water shortages have reportedly led to conflicts between tribes in Thi-Qar and Muthanna governorates.¹³⁰³ Clashes between tribes and tribal violence were reported in all the districts of the governorate, namely Al-Shatra,¹³⁰⁴ Al-Nasiriya,¹³⁰⁵ Suq Al-Shuyukh (Suq

¹²⁹⁷ Shafaq News, Iraqi Interior Ministry to take over security in Dhi Qar, Samarra, 7 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁹⁸ EUAA, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#), p. 83

¹²⁹⁹ Berghof Foundation, PPO, Climate change effects on conflict dynamics in Iraq: Study of Makhmur, Tal Afar, and Al-Rifai districts, 6 October 2023, [url](#), p. 19

¹³⁰⁰ Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, التهديد الأمني الأول في ذي قار العراقية [Tribal conflicts: the most important security threat Iraqi Thi-Qar], 6 May 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁰¹ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁰² EUAA, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#), p. 82

¹³⁰³ E-International Relations, Water Scarcity and Environmental Peacebuilding: A Lens on Southern Iraq, 18 May 2023, [url](#), p. 2

¹³⁰⁴ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#); Shafaq News, "استخدمت القوات الأمنية توقف نزاعا عشائريا عنيفا في ذي قار" [Use of Force: Security forces stop violent tribal clash in Thi-Qar], 20 May 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁰⁵ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#); Al-Mirbad, وصول تعزيزات [Security reinforcements arrive to control the tribal conflict in Thi-Qar], 4 March 2024, [url](#); Al-Sumaria, مقتل ثلاثة أشقاء بنزاع عشائري [Nasiriya: Three brothers killed in tribal conflict], 4 October 2023, [url](#); New Arab (The), Two killed, six injured in violent tribal conflict in Iraq, 30 September 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, استخدمت فيه الهاونات.. قوة عسكرية كبيرة تدخل لإصلاح ذي قار للسيطرة على نزاع عشائري [Use of mortars: Large military force enters Islah district in Thi-Qar to control a tribal conflict], 26 September 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, عودت التوتر الأمني في قضاء الاصلاح بسبب تجدد النزاع بين الرميض وال عمر [Thi Qar: Security tensions back in Islah district due to renewed conflict between the tribes Al-Rumaid and Omar], 18 July 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, قتلوا ضابطا بطريقة "الإعدام".. قائد شرطة ذي قار يقتحم معقل "آل رميض" جنوبي العراق [Officer killed using 'execution method': Thi Qar police chief storms Al-Rumayd stronghold in southern Iraq], 13 April 2023, [url](#)

Al Shoyokh),¹³⁰⁶ Al-Rifa'i (Al Rifai),¹³⁰⁷ and Al-Jubayish (Al Chibayish).¹³⁰⁸ Tribal clashes in the governorate were reported, for example, between the Atab and Hatem clans, between the Omar and Rumayd clans,¹³⁰⁹ between the Al-Awwad and Al-Sayed Taher clans,¹³¹⁰ between the Hajam and Albu Ziyad clans,¹³¹¹ between members of the Bani Sa'id (Bani Saeed) clan¹³¹² and between the Bani Rikab and Al-Shuwaylat tribes.¹³¹³ Some of the clashes reportedly resulted in casualties.¹³¹⁴

Over the course of the reference period, sources reported recurrent tensions and clashes in the Al-Islah area of Al-Nasiriya district between the Omar and Rumayd clans.¹³¹⁵ The ISF reportedly intervened and conducted several security operations in order to contain the

¹³⁰⁶ Shafaq News, قتل وإصابة 7 أشخاص بنزاع عشائري طاحن جنوبي ذي قار [Seven people killed and injured in fierce fighting between tribes south of Thi-Qar], 30 November 2023, [url](#); Al-Mirbad, اصابات مختلفة في تجدد نزاع عشائري مسلح [Various injuries in renewed armed tribal conflict south of Thi-Qar], 30 November 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, انفجار يهز موقع "صلاة الجمعة" الصدرية في ذي قار [An explosion shakes Sadrist 'Friday Prayer' site in Dhi Qar], 17 March 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁰⁷ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#); EPIC, ISHM: April 13 – 20, 2023, 20 April 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, How does political conflict fuel tribal disputes in Iraq?, 25 April 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁰⁸ Shafaq News, مقتل معلم يفجر نزاعاً عشائرياً عنيفاً ويودي بحياة 6 أشخاص جنوبي العراق [Killing of teacher sparks violent tribal conflict and kills six people in southern Iraq], 5 January 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, بين قتيل وجريح.. ما قصة النزاع [14 casualties: What's the story behind the tribal conflict in Thi-Qar governorate?], 15 April 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁰⁹ Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, النزاعات العشائرية... التهديد الأمني الأول في ذي قار العراقية [Tribal conflicts: the most important security threat Iraqi Thi-Qar], 6 May 2023, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#)

¹³¹⁰ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#); Shafaq News, استخدمت "استخدمت" القوات الأمنية توقف نزاعاً عشائرياً عنيفاً في ذي قار [Use of Force: Security forces stop violent tribal clash in Thi-Qar], 20 May 2023, [url](#)

¹³¹¹ Shafaq News, قتل وإصابة 7 أشخاص بنزاع عشائري طاحن جنوبي ذي قار [Seven people killed and injured in fierce fighting between tribes south of Thi-Qar], 30 November 2023, [url](#)

¹³¹² Shafaq News, انفجار يهز موقع "صلاة الجمعة" الصدرية في ذي قار [An explosion shakes Sadrist 'Friday Prayer' site in Dhi Qar], 17 March 2023, [url](#)

¹³¹³ Berghof Foundation, PPO, Climate change effects on conflict dynamics in Iraq: Study of Makhmur, Tal Afar, and Al-Rifai districts, 6 October 2023, [url](#), p. 19

¹³¹⁴ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#); Al-Mirbad, وصول تعزيزات [Security reinforcements arrive to control the tribal conflict in Thi-Qar], 4 March 2024, [url](#); New Arab (The), Two killed, six injured in violent tribal conflict in Iraq, 30 September 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, قتلوا ضابطاً بطريقة "الإعدام" قائد شرطة ذي قار يقتحم معقل "آل رميض" جنوبي العراق [Officer killed using 'execution method': Thi Qar police chief storms Al-Rumayd stronghold in southern Iraq], 13 April 2023, [url](#); Al-Sumaria, مقتل ثلاثة أشقاء بنزاع عشائري [Nasiriya: Three brothers killed in tribal conflict], 4 October 2023, [url](#); New Arab (The), Two killed, six injured in violent tribal conflict in Iraq, 30 September 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, مقتل معلم يفجر نزاعاً عشائرياً عنيفاً ويودي بحياة 6 أشخاص جنوبي العراق [Killing of teacher sparks violent tribal conflict and kills six people in southern Iraq], 5 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³¹⁵ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url](#); New Arab (The), Two killed, six injured in violent tribal conflict in Iraq, 30 September 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, عود التوتر الأمني في ذي قار.. عودة التوتر الأمني في [Thi Qar: Security tensions back in Israh district due to renewed conflict between the tribes Al-Rumaid and Omar], 18 July 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, قتلوا ضابطاً بطريقة "الإعدام" قائد شرطة ذي قار يقتحم معقل "آل رميض" جنوبي العراق [Officer killed using 'execution method': Thi Qar police chief storms Al-Rumayd stronghold in southern Iraq], 13 April 2023, [url](#)

security situation in light of these¹³¹⁶ and other tribal conflicts.¹³¹⁷ On March 4, 2024, authorities reportedly imposed an 'indefinite' curfew in Al-Islah following tribal clashes.¹³¹⁸

According to the abovementioned Berghof Foundation report, mild tensions between the Bani Rikab and Al-Shuwaylat clans have escalated into clashes in recent years, creating an 'atmosphere of instability and mistrust'. According to interviewees and focus groups consulted for the report, access to water was a driving force behind the conflicts. However, they indicated that these conflicts, which had increased in the previous years, had decreased in 2023 due to increased rainfall. They also indicated that such conflicts are usually 'effectively and quickly resolved by tribal authorities, or security and administrative actors'.¹³¹⁹

In the context of an escalation of hostilities between the Sadr movement and AAH in early 2024, the Nasiriya hospital reportedly became the scene of an armed conflict between the two factions.¹³²⁰ According to an Al-Arab article, AAH forces attempted to enter the hospital and were prevented by Sadrist fighters, leading to an armed clash and the intervention of the ISF.¹³²¹

Moreover, in the reference period, a KSS headquarters in Suq Al-Shuyukh (Suq Al Shoyokh) district¹³²² and a headquarters of a Sadrist faction in the city of Nasiriya were targeted by unknown gunmen, without causing any casualties.¹³²³

Furthermore, a number of attacks were carried out by unidentified perpetrators against civilians of certain profiles or against their houses or vehicles, including against a lawyer,¹³²⁴

¹³¹⁶ Al-Mirbad, *وصول تعزيزات أمنية للسيطرة على النزاع العشائري في ذي قار* [Security reinforcements arrive to control the tribal conflict in Thi-Qar], 4 March 2024, [url](#); NINA, *فرقة الرد السريع تنفذ عملياتها الأمنية شرق الناصرية للحد من الخلافات العشائرية* [Rapid Response Division carries out security operations east of Nasiriyah to reduce tribal disputes], 6 March 2024, [url](#); Shafaq News, *قتلوا ضابطاً بطريقة "الإعدام" قائد شرطة ذي قار يقتحم معقل "آل رميض" جنوبي العراق* [Officer killed using 'execution method': Thi Qar police chief storms Al-Rumayd stronghold in southern Iraq], 13 April 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, *استخدمت فيه الهاونات.. قوة عسكرية كبيرة تدخل لإصلاح ذي قار للسيطرة على نزاع عشائري* [Use of mortars: Large military force enters Islah district in Thi-Qar to control a tribal conflict], 26 September 2023, [url](#)

¹³¹⁷ NINA, *شرطة ذي قار تنفذ حملة مدهامة لأحدى القرى على خلفية نزاع عشائري* [Dhi Qar police carry out a raid on a village against the backdrop of a tribal dispute], 23 December 2023, [url](#); Al-Mirbad, *إصابات مختلفة في تجدد نزاع عشائري مسلح* [Various injuries in renewed armed tribal conflict south of Thi-Qar], 30 November 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, *"استخدمت القوة" القوات الأمنية توقف نزاعاً عشائرياً عنيفاً في ذي قار* ["Use of Force": Security forces stop violent tribal clash in Thi-Qar], 20 May 2023, [url](#); International Crisis Group, *Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024*, n.d., [url](#)

¹³¹⁸ Crisis24, *Iraq: Officials implement indefinite curfew in Al Islah District, Dhi Qar Governorate*, March 4, 4 March 2024, [url](#)

¹³¹⁹ Berghof Foundation, *PPO, Climate change effects on conflict dynamics in Iraq: Study of Makhmur, Tal Afar, and Al-Rifai districts*, 6 October 2023, [url](#), pp. 20-21

¹³²⁰ Shafaq News, *نشر سيطرات أمنية غير رسمية.. حصيلة جديدة لاشتباكات "العصائب والتيار" في ذي قار* [Deployment of unofficial security checks: new result of clashes between the Asa'ib and the Tayyar in Thi-Qar], 21 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³²¹ Al-Arab, *الأمن في مدن عراقية رهين حالة العداء بين مقتدى الصدر وقيس الخزعلي* [The security in Iraqi cities depends on hostilities between Muqtada Al-Sadr and Qais Al-Khazali], 6 February 2024, [url](#); Shafaq News, *اشتباك مسلح بين "العصائب والتيار" في محيط مستشفى الناصرية والقوات الأمنية تتدخل* [Armed clash between AAH and the Sadrist movement in the surroundings of the Nasiriya hospital and intervention of security forces], 21 January 2021, [url](#)

¹³²² Al-Mirbad, *كتائب سيد الشهداء تدين الاعتداء على مكتبها الخدمي في ذي قار* [Sayyid al-Shuhada Brigades condemn the attack on their service office in Thi-Qar], 29 February 2024, [url](#); Shafaq News, *An RPG damages a PMF headquarters in Dhi Qar*, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

¹³²³ Shafaq News, *انفجار يهز موقع "صلاة الجمعة" الصدرية في ذي قار* [An explosion shakes Sadrist 'Friday Prayer' site in Dhi Qar], 17 March 2023, [url](#)

¹³²⁴ Al-Mirbad, *احترق مركبة تعود لمحامٍ وسط الناصرية* [Vehicle of lawyer was burned in the centre of Nasiriyah], 22 November 2023, [url](#)

the leader of a sports club,¹³²⁵ a cashier,¹³²⁶ a supporter of a local election candidate,¹³²⁷ a human resources leader of the education department of Al-Shatra district,¹³²⁸ and a tribal leader,¹³²⁹ some of which caused civilian casualties.¹³³⁰

In November 2023, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that drug criminality and drug-related violence were a visible issue in Thi-Qar governorate.¹³³¹

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 163 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Thi-Qar governorate, of which 78 were coded as battles, 38 explosions/remote violence, and 47 incidents of violence against civilians.¹³³² The majority of security incidents were documented in Al-Nasiriya district. According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups and unidentified tribal militias were involved in the majority of events coded as battles and violence against civilians.

¹³²⁵ Al-Mirbad, استهداف مركبة "رئيس نادي رياضي" بعوبة صوتية وسط الناصرية [Car of 'leader of sports club' attacked with sonic device in the centre of Nasiriya], 19 February 2024, [url](#)

¹³²⁶ Al-Mirbad, استهداف منزل شخص برمانة صوتية وسط الناصرية [Individual's home attacked by sonic weapon in centre of Nasiriya], 28 December 2023, [url](#)

¹³²⁷ Shafaq News, دمار في قار تمسّي على عبوتين ناسفتين وعجلة محترقة [Destruction in Thi-Qar due to two explosive devices and burning tire], 17 November 2023, [url](#)

¹³²⁸ Al-Mirbad, مقتل شخص يعمل موظفا في قضاء الشرطة شمال ذي قار [Employee killed in Al-Shatra district north of Thi-Qar], 30 April 2023, [url](#)

¹³²⁹ Al-Mirbad, استهداف منزل شيخ برمانة صوتية شمال ذي قار [House of tribal leader attacked with sonic weapon in Thi-Qar], 25 October 2023, [url](#)

¹³³⁰ Al-Mirbad, مقتل شخص يعمل موظفا في قضاء الشرطة شمال ذي قار [Employee killed in Al-Shatra district north of Thi-Qar], 30 April 2023, [url](#); Al-Mirbad, مقتل شخص يعمل روحانيا وسط الناصرية [Spiritual worker killed in the centre of Nasiriya], 9 December 2023, [url](#)

¹³³¹ Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen ambtsbericht Irak [Country report Iraq], November 2023, [url](#), p. 17

¹³³² EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

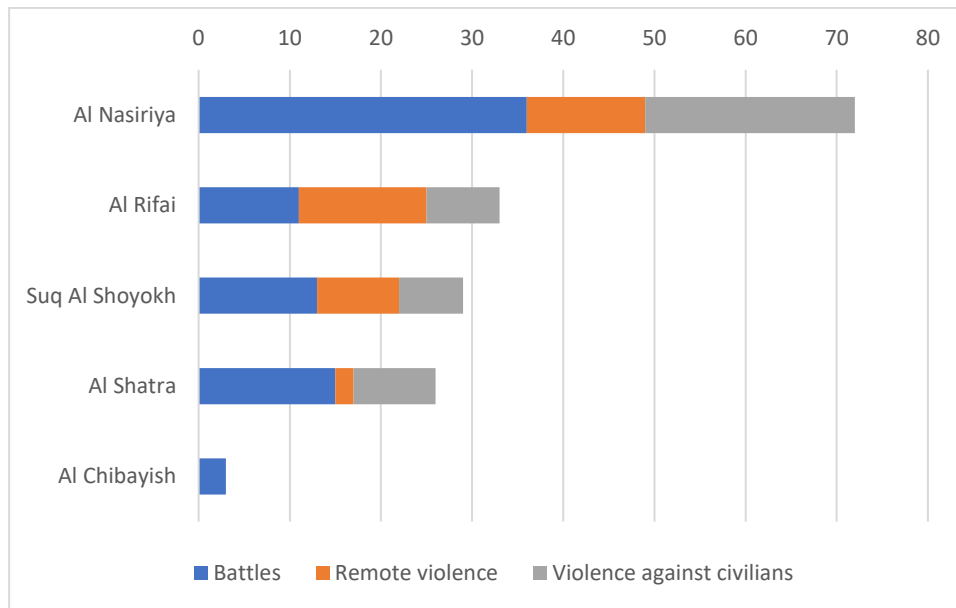


Figure 38. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Thi-Qar governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP recorded one event leading to fatalities in Thi-Qar governorate.¹³³³

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 2 civilian casualties in Thi-Qar governorate.¹³³⁴ For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Thi-Qar governorate.¹³³⁵

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

In the context of the above-mentioned escalation of hostilities between the Sadr movement and AAH in February 2024, the Nasiriya hospital reportedly became the scene of an armed conflict.¹³³⁶ Further information on conflict-related infrastructure damage in the reference period could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

¹³³³ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

¹³³⁴ UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

¹³³⁵ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

¹³³⁶ Al-Arab, الأمن في مدن عراقية رهين حالة العداء بين مقتدى الصدر وقيس الخزعلي [The security in Iraqi cities depends on hostilities between Muqtada Al-Sadr and Qais Al-Khazali], 6 February 2024, [url](#); Shafaq News, اشتباك مسلح بين العصاب والتيار "في محيط مستشفى الناصرية والقوات الأمنية تتدخل" [Armed clash between AAH and the Sadrist movement in the surroundings of the Nasiriya hospital and intervention of security forces], 21 January 2021, [url](#)



As of the end of 2022, around 44 887 183 square metres of Thi-Qar governorate's area were reported to be cluster munition-contaminated.¹³³⁷ According to the 2023 Mine Action Review, Thi-Qar was one of the three most cluster munition-contaminated governorates in Iraq.¹³³⁸ In the reference period, incidents of civilian casualties in Thi-Qar caused by explosions of ERW were reported,¹³³⁹ for example in Nasiriya city¹³⁴⁰ and in the Abu Ghar area of Thi Qar's southern desert region.¹³⁴¹ Further relevant information on explosive remnants of war could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

Conflict-induced displacement and return

As of December 2023, IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)¹³⁴² documented no displacements from Thi-Qar governorate to other parts of the country or within Thi-Qar governorate.¹³⁴³

As of December 2023, IOM has not documented any returns to Thi-Qar governorate.¹³⁴⁴

¹³³⁷ Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 61

¹³³⁸ Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023, 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 66

¹³³⁹ Shafaq News, انفجار يقتل شخصاً ويصيب آخر من "البدو" جنوبي العراق [Explosion kills a 'Bedouin' and injures another person in southern Iraq], 16 July 2023, [url](#); Al-Mirbad, إصابة امرأة وطفلتها بانفجار لغم أرضي في بادية ذي قار [Woman and her child injured in landmine explosion in Thi-Qar desert], 9 January 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁴⁰ Shafaq News, انفجار يقتل شخصاً ويصيب آخر من "البدو" جنوبي العراق [Explosion kills a 'Bedouin' and injures another person in southern Iraq], 16 July 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁴¹ Al-Mirbad, إصابة امرأة وطفلتها بانفجار لغم أرضي في بادية ذي قار [Woman and her child injured in landmine explosion in Thi-Qar desert], 9 January 2023, [url](#)

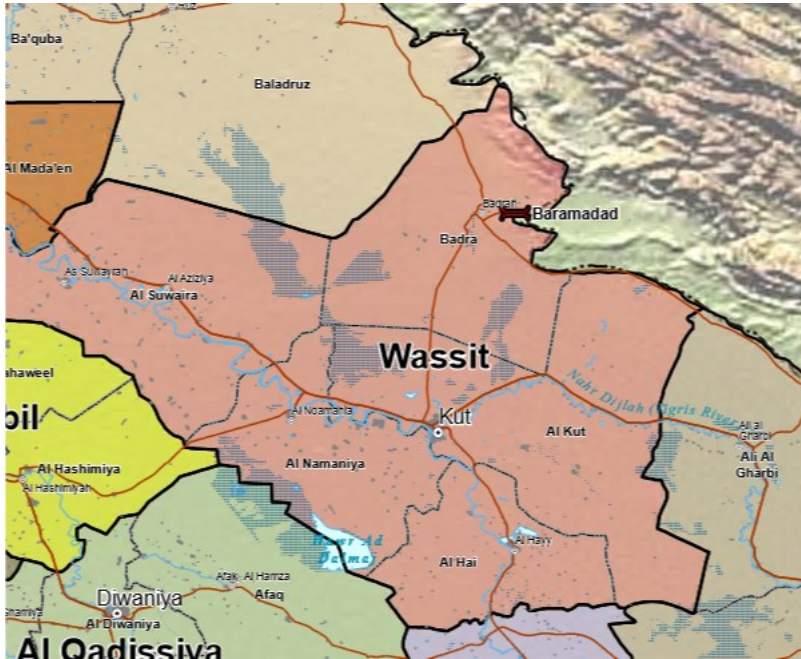
¹³⁴² Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

¹³⁴³ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁴⁴ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)



2.18. Wassit



Map 19: Wassit governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.¹³⁴⁵

General description of governorate

Wassit (Wasit) shares an international border with Iran to the east. It borders the governorates Diyala, Baghdad, Babil, Qadissiya, Thi-Qar and Missan.¹³⁴⁶ According to more recent sources, the governorate is divided into five districts,¹³⁴⁷ while an older source lists the following six districts.¹³⁴⁸ Al-Aziziya (Al-Azezia), Badra, Al-Kut, Al-Suwaira, Al-Namaniya (Al-Numaniyah), and Al-Hai (Al-Hay) – with Al-Azezia treated as a sub-district of Al-Suwaira when five districts are listed. The capital of the governorate is Kut.¹³⁴⁹

For 2022, the Iraqi Central Statistical Organization (CSO) estimated the governorate's population at 1 527 911.¹³⁵⁰

¹³⁴⁵ UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, [url](#)

¹³⁴⁶ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Wassit Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

¹³⁴⁷ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Wassit Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#); UNOCHA, Iraq: National Reference Map [Map], 28 September 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁴⁸ UN IAU, Wassit Governorate Profile [Map], November 2010, [url](#), p. 1

¹³⁴⁹ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Wassit Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁰ Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8



The majority of Wassit's inhabitants are Shia Arab,¹³⁵¹ but there were also communities of Feyli Kurds¹³⁵² in Badra district and east of the capital Kut.¹³⁵³ Bidoon communities, who fled Kuwait following Iraq's invasion in 1990 were also reported to exist.¹³⁵⁴

For information on the economy in Wassit, please refer to section 2.18.1 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

Armed actors' presence and control

For information on the conflict background and the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to sections 2.18.2 and 2.18.3 of the previous [EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation \(January 2022\)](#).

In 2023, the police force took over responsibility over the security of the governorate from the Iraqi army.¹³⁵⁵

According to an article by Al-Mirbad, the PMF's Al-Abbas Combat Division¹³⁵⁶ was present in Wassit governorate.¹³⁵⁷ Furthermore, Shafaq News reported that the PMF's Saraya Al-Salam had a headquarters in the centre of Al-Kut city¹³⁵⁸ and that the PMF's Harakat Al-Nujaba (HAN) had a camp in Taj Al-Din sub-district of the governorate.¹³⁵⁹

Further information on the presence and areas of control of armed actors in Wassit governorate in the reference period could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

Recent security trends

According to EPIC, Wassit governorate was relatively calm as it was not affected by the ISIL occupation.¹³⁶⁰ In the reference period, sporadic security-related incidents were reported in Wassit governorate. These included sporadic tribal clashes, resulting in casualties, for

¹³⁵¹ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁵² UNHCR, Statelessness and Risks of Statelessness in Iraq: Faili Kurd and Bidoon Communities, September 2022, [url](#), pp. 10, 12, 18

¹³⁵³ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁴ UNHCR, Statelessness and Risks of Statelessness in Iraq: Faili Kurd and Bidoon Communities, September 2022, [url](#), p. 11; Stateless Journey, Statelessness in Iraq, November 2019, [url](#), p. 2

¹³⁵⁵ New Arab (The), Transfer of security responsibilities from Iraq's army to local police stalled by challenges, 18 September 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁶ TWI, The al-Abbas Combat Division Model: Reducing Iranian Influence in Iraq's Security Forces, 22 August 2017, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁷ Al-Mirbad, [Al-Abbas Combat Division announces implementation of housing projects in Wassit], 13 June 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁸ Shafaq News, [اشتباك وتبادل إطلاق نار بين مجموعة من 'سرايا السلام' وقوة أمنية في واسط] [Clashes and exchange of fire between Saraya Al-Salam and ISF in Wassit], 14 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁹ Shafaq News, [قصف يطل معسكراً لـ'النجباء' في واسط والبنّتاغون يتبنى شن 3 هجمات على 'كتائب حزب الله' في العراق] [Airstrike targets 'Al-Nujaba' camp in Wassit, and the Pentagon claims launching 3 attacks on 'Kata'ib Hezbollah' in Iraq], 26 December 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁰ EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](#)



example in¹³⁶¹ and around the city of Kut,¹³⁶² and in the governorate's Sayyid Al-Shuhada sub-district.¹³⁶³ A clash between Saraya Al-Salam and the ISF was also reported in the city of Kut. It was reportedly caused when a member of the security forces attempted to search the vehicle of Saraya Al-Salam members at a checkpoint.¹³⁶⁴ In one incident, a HAN camp in Taj Al-Din sub-district was targeted by a drone strike carried out by unknown perpetrators.¹³⁶⁵

Further relevant information on recent security trends could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), 16 security incidents were recorded by ACLED in Wassit governorate, of which 7 were coded as battles, 3 explosions/remote violence, and 6 incidents of violence against civilians.¹³⁶⁶ The majority of security incidents were documented in Al Kut district. According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups were involved in the majority of events coded as battles and violence against civilians.

¹³⁶¹ Shafaq News, مقتل شخص بهجوم مسلح في واسط [Because of financial and tribal disputes: Individual killed in armed attack in Wassit], 23 February 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶² Shafaq News, 'مشاجرة واسط'.. نزاع عشائري شارك فيه العشرات وتسبب بمقتل شخص [Wassit: Dozens participate in tribal clashes, which led to killing of one person], 21 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶³ Shafaq News, قتل وجرحى بنزاع مسلح في واسط [One person killed and others injured as a result of armed clash in Wassit], 2 May 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, استعراض عشائري مسلح في واسط [Armed tribal parade in Wassit leads to arrest of police director and regiment commander by Ministry for Internal Affairs], 5 May 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁴ Shafaq News, اشتباك وتبادل إطلاق نار بين مجموعة من 'سرايا السلام' وقوة أمنية في واسط [Clashes and exchange of fire between Saraya Al-Salam and ISF in Wassit], 14 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁵ Shafaq News, قصف يطل معسكراً لـ 'النجباء' في واسط والبنتاغون يتبنى شن 3 هجمات على 'كتائب حزب الله' في العراق [Airstrike targets 'Al-Nujaba' camp in Wassit, and the Pentagon claims launching 3 attacks on 'Kata'ib Hezbollah' in Iraq], 26 December 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁶ EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](#)

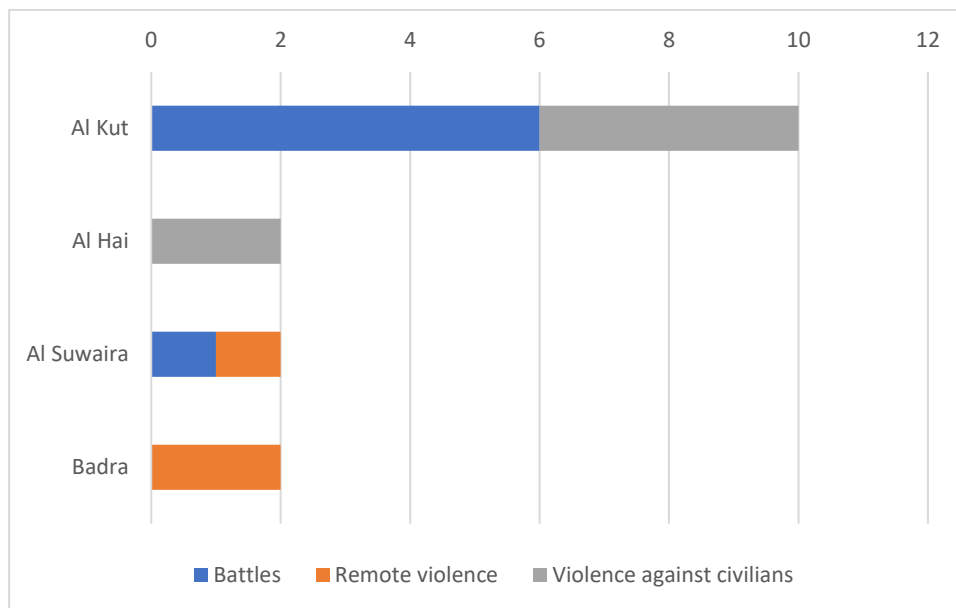


Figure 39. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Wassit governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any events resulting in fatalities in Wassit governorate.¹³⁶⁷

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 2 civilian casualties in Wassit governorate.¹³⁶⁸

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Wassit governorate.¹³⁶⁹

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

Information on conflict-related infrastructure damage in the reference period could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

As of the end of 2022, Mine Action review had not documented any cluster munition contaminated area in Wassit governorate.¹³⁷⁰ However, in January 2023, Al-Mirbad reported that a member of the security forces was injured in Zurbatiyah city by an ERW explosion.¹³⁷¹

¹³⁶⁷ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

¹³⁶⁸ UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

¹³⁶⁹ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

¹³⁷⁰ Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 61

¹³⁷¹ Al-Mirbad, إصابة منتسب أمني بانفجار لغم حربي في واسط [Member of security forces was injured by a mine explosion in Wassit], 12 January 2023, [url](#)



Conflict-induced displacement and return

As of December 2023, IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)¹³⁷² did not document any displacement from Wassit governorate to other parts of the country or within Wassit governorate.¹³⁷³

As of December 2023, IOM has not documented any returns to Wassit governorate.¹³⁷⁴

¹³⁷² Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, [url](#), p. 1

¹³⁷³ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷⁴ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#)





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Annex 2: Terms of Reference

The information contained in this report will inform the update of the chapters on the assessment of the application of Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive. The reference period for the report should be **1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024**.

- **General description of the security situation**
 - Overview of conflict and recent security trends
 - Political developments
 - International involvement
 - Armed actors
 - Brief description and capacity
 - Presence and areas of control/influence of the different actors
 - Impact of the security situation on civilian population
 - Security incidents
 - Number and type of security incidents
 - Type of weapons and tactics used
 - Civilian casualties
 - Conflict related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war
 - Conflict-induced displacement and return
- **Security situation and conflict impact on civilians by governorates**
 - General description of governorate
 - Actors involved in conflict during the reference period and control/presence
 - Recent security trends
 - Security incidents
 - Civilian casualties
 - Conflict related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war
 - Conflict-induced displacement and return



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