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Iraq After ISIL

Sub-State Actors, Local Forces, and the Micro-Politics of Control

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REPORT
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Community or regional forces, militia forces, and other local security actors have long existed in Iraq. However, as the Islamic State of Iraq swept through central and northern Iraq in 2014, local, sub-state, and hybrid security forces mobilized to resist. These sub-state and local forces provided an important bulwark against ISIL, filling gaps in the Iraqi Security Forces and holding territory regained from ISIL. But have these groups lived up to their promise in terms of promoting stability? How do any security gains balance against other potential side effects, in terms of protection of civilians, rule of law and governance, or community dynamics? How will the greater reliance on these quasi- or non-state actors impact the long-term prospects for the Iraqi state?

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About the Authors & Acknowledgments

This study was supported by a research grant funded by the Netherlands Research Organisation (NWO). It was originally published as a series of geographic case studies, background studies, and smaller, analytical pieces on GPPi's website, a total of 15 separate pieces. Given the length of material, the highlights of each were incorporated into this text by Erica Gaston and András Derzsi-Horváth, who were also the primary authors of most of the individual pieces. In addition, Christine van den Toorn, Frauke Maas, Sarah Mathieu-Comtois, Hana Nasser, Bahra Saleh, and Mario Schulz were contributing writers and/or contributed additional analysis and editing to the originally published pieces. Field research was led by Erica Gaston and András Derzsi-Horváth, and conducted together with Ammar Ahmmed, Mohamed Faiq, Mostafa Ahmad Hassan, Ibrahim Khalaf, Amin al-Qaisi, Mahmoud Zaki, and Diyar Barzanji, among others. Bahra Saleh, Mario Schulz, James Barklamb, Victoria Heckenlaible, Frauke Maas, and Hana Nasser also contributed significant research support. Publication of the original pieces would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of Eka Rostomashvili, and this compiled study has only been possible with the keen eye and editorial support of Katharina Nachbar and Jacqueline Parry. Special thanks also go to Philipp Rotmann and to the team at IRIS, specifically Christine van den Toorn, for their critical advice and support through all stages of the research.

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List of Common Acronyms

GOI	Government of Iraq
HPS	Sinjar Protection Forces (Hêzen Parastina Shingal)
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KSF	Kurdish Security Forces
KTCC	Kurdistan Training Coordination Center
LHSF	Local, Hybrid, and Sub-state Forces
MOP	Ministry of Peshmerga
NPF	Ninewa Plain Forces
NPGF	Ninewa Plains Guard Forces
NPU	Ninewa Plains Protection Unit
NSS	Iraqi National Security Service
NWO	Netherlands Research Organisation
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PMF	Popular Mobilization Forces
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
TMF	Tribal Mobilization Forces
YBS	Sinjar Resistance Units (Yekîneyên Berxwedana Şengalê)
YPG	People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel)
YPJ	Kurdish Women's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Jin)

Executive Summary

After their initial retreat and collapse, Iraqi forces rose to confront the challenge posed by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and by the end of 2017 had recaptured the vast areas of northern and central Iraq taken by ISIL in 2014. They were aided in doing so not only by a 'Coalition' of international actors and forces, but also by a wide range of local, hybrid, and sub-state security forces (hereinafter LHSFs) who were mobilized to confront the ISIL threat. These LHSFs played a critical role in recapturing and holding territory, but they also pose a challenge for what comes next. As local and sub-state forces have grown and strengthened, they have increasingly assumed responsibility for security, governance, and critical services. As a result, while north and central Iraq may now be out of ISIL's hands, they are not firmly in the Iraqi state's control either. This fragmentation of authority and the sheer number of mobilized forces, with conflicting allegiances and agendas, pose significant challenges for the future strength of rule of law and governance, as well as overall stability.

In the first half of 2017, the Global Public Policy institute (GPPi) conducted research examining the role LHSFs were playing in local communities and their impact on local and national dynamics. Research was conducted in 15 locations in three governorates — Ninewa, Salah ad-Din, and Kirkuk — between February and July 2017. The research examined the dynamics surrounding three major types of LHSFs:

- **Kurdish forces** (~200,000 forces): Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) forces (also referred to as Peshmerga) had long existed and were the only legally recognized regional force in 2014. However, in response to the ISIL threat, the KRG mobilized, equipped, and trained a greater share of Peshmerga fighters. From 2014 on, Kurdish forces' activities and control expanded, in particular extending Kurdish control across more areas in the Disputed Territories.

- **Popular Mobilization Forces** (PMF) (~120,000 forces): The PMF is an umbrella organization for some 50+ armed groups who mobilized to support the Iraqi state against ISIL following a 2014 *fatwa* by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Iraq's senior cleric. It was granted a legal status equivalent to Iraqi forces in late 2016. While including thousands of new forces that formed only after 2014, its leadership and membership is dominated by a handful of pre-existing, well-established predominantly Shi'a militias. Many of them had emerged well before 2014 and were backed by Iran or Shi'a political parties. They played a significant role in liberating and holding areas, but also sparked some of the most significant human rights and governance concerns.

- **Local or minority forces:** In addition to these larger forces, smaller, locally-recruited forces – from Sunni tribal forces (sometimes referred to as *hashd al-asha'ir* or 'tribal' *hashd*) to local Turkmen, Shabak, Yazidi, and Chaldo-Assyrian or Christian forces – were present in most areas but played a supporting to

marginal role. With only a few hundred to a few thousand members each, these local forces did not have the numbers or political strength to stand on their own and tended to affiliate with one of the larger forces: the ISF, Kurdish forces, or one of the leading Shi'a PMF groups.

In some areas, these LHSFs had a positive influence, providing security, allowing for reconstruction and regular governance activities to take place, and enabling aid. In other areas, the positive role of the LHSFs in ousting ISIL was counterbalanced by their forces' criminal, abusive, and predatory behavior. The explosion of armed actors, with easy access to arms and few constraints, has enabled a high level of extrajudicial violence. Some of these acts were purely criminal in nature, but others were driven by political, ethnic, or sectarian motivations. LHSFs tend to mobilize around a specific ethno-religious identity, a trend which has further factionalized already divisive identity politics. Members of LHSFs frequently used their power to lash out at members of opposing sects, parties, ethnicities, or tribes. LHSFs in control of checkpoints or local areas restricted the return of certain populations, either by directly refusing access or by deterring return through the destruction of property or intimidation of local populations. In places like Kirkuk, Tuz, Tal Afar, and other parts of the Disputed Territories, LHSF forces' selective property destruction, prevention of returns, or abuses of other population groups played into existing political, ethnic, and sectarian divisions and appear likely to seed future conflict. The proliferation of LHSFs also impacted the strength of state authority and rule of law. Although some LHSFs acted only as auxiliaries to ISF, others held areas on their own and were the only governing body or force around, undermining overall state control. Even where the Iraqi government was in charge, the existence of other armed actors deputized to support them precluded coherent command and control. Each of these actors was vested with some degree of local authority, giving the impression that no one actor, particularly the Iraqi government, was in charge. The sheer number of groups, alongside weak command and control and few enforcement options, made it difficult for Iraqi authorities to prevent or punish criminal acts, which reinforced a sense of impunity and lawlessness.

The presence of these many groups also offers opportunities for actors with different interests than the Iraqi government to influence or disrupt local spaces. Regional actors, like Iran or Turkey, actively backed LHSFs in different areas to increase their influence and advance their strategic interests. Both Kurdish forces and the larger Shi'a PMF groups used the 2014–2017 period to increase their leverage in local communities, including by establishing local forces. These local ties may offer either Shi'a PMF or Kurdish forces opportunities to disrupt the status quo where their interests diverge from those of the Iraqi government. The mass mobilization and fragmentation of the security sector poses challenges to the restoration of stability, regular governance, and rule of law. To counter these trends, any future stabilization strategy must try to address the fragmentation of the Iraqi state not only from the top down but also from the bottom up. Re-establishing Iraqi control and stabilizing these areas will require greater attention to the micro-politics of control, to reconstructing local governance spaces, easing local tensions, and reducing competing sources of control from the ground up. The mobilization of and competition between LHSFs is tightly intermeshed with political dynamics in Iraq. Getting these issues under control is key to finding a stable balance between different stakeholders within the Iraqi state.

Introduction

Regional or community forces, militias, and other local security actors have long existed in Iraq. However, when the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) took over large swaths of territory in 2014, Iraqi government control splintered and the number of local, hybrid, or sub-state security forces (LHSFs, as used in this report) proliferated. Critical among these were the long-standing, 200,000-strong Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) forces and the roughly 160,000-member (and growing) Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). The PMF (also known as *al-hashd ash-sha'abi*, or simply *hashd*) is an umbrella group of different militia or sub-state forces that was granted formal status by the Iraqi Parliament in November 2016. Smaller forces also emerged from the communities occupied by ISIL, including a diverse range of minority forces that mobilized along ethnic, sectarian, or political lines, such as Sunni tribal forces, and Turkmen, Yezidi, Christian, or Chaldo-Assyrian forces, among others.

In the first half of 2017, GPPi, together with IRIS at the American University in Sulaimaini, conducted research examining the role LHSFs were playing in local communities and their impact on local and national dynamics.[1] It would be impossible to capture the full range of LHSF relationships and behavior in Iraq given the number and diversity of groups and the constantly shifting dynamics. However, by illustrating the range of LHSF dynamics and relationships in three governorates, this study provides field-level data to help understand the consequences of this mass mobilization and balkanization of security control, both for local and national dynamics.

Research was conducted in 15 locations, across three governorates – Ninewa, Salah ad-Din, and Kirkuk – between February and July 2017. The vast majority of the case studies are at a district or subdistrict level, with one governorate-wide case study (Kirkuk). The scope of analysis – whether to analyze trends at a governorate, district, or subdistrict level – depended on the dynamics in that area. In some locations, tensions between different LHSFs or the local effects were manifest at the smallest, subdistrict level, but in others, a district or governorate-wide scope was more helpful in drawing out the tensions and dynamics. The findings are summarized in 11 case studies:

- **Ninewa**: Mosul city; Qayyara subdistrict; Qaraqosh city and Hamdaniyya district; Rabi'a subdistrict; Zummar subdistrict; Tal Afar subdistrict;
- **Salah ad-Din**: Tikrit district and surrounding areas (Dour district and al-Alam subdistrict); Shirqat district; Baiji district; Tuz Khurmatu district (hereinafter "Tuz");
- **Kirkuk** (research findings summarized in one governorate-wide case study).

These geographic case studies and other background information were shared as a series of articles on GPPi's website, on the micro-site www.gppi.net/publications/iraq-after-isil.

This study summarizes and condenses the findings from 15 of these articles in order to draw cross-comparisons and highlight thematic trends. The previously published, full studies are available online, each with more detailed information about the context and LHSFs in the respective area.[2]

Kurdish Peshmerga fighters undergo international training to fight ISIL.

In the rest of this study, these case studies are referenced simply by their place names. For example, a reference to Tikrit will reference the findings in Tikrit district, not Tikrit city; Kirkuk references the governorate-wide findings, not Kirkuk city (unless otherwise specified); Zummar references the findings in Zummar subdistrict not Zummar city; the shorthand "Tuz" will be used for the findings in Tuz district as a whole, and the full name, Tuz Khurmatu for the capital city of Tuz district.

In each location, researchers sought to establish which LHSFs were active in the area, what their relationship was with other groups or with the Iraqi government, and what role they played in the local community. For example, did the LHSF in question act as the dominant security broker in the local area, work in conjunction with one of the larger forces, or play an auxiliary or nominal role in providing security services? Although there was a plethora of groups, the vast majority had too few forces or political authority to exert significant control over the area on their own. Instead, what emerged in many areas was a competition for control between the larger force contingents, Kurdish forces and Baghdad-affiliated forces, and the many smaller groups allying with one force or the other. This was particularly prominent in the band of territory known as the Disputed Territories, which is populated by a mix of Arabs, Kurds and ethnoreligious minorities, and control over which has been disputed between the central government and KRG for decades.[3] The recapture of the Disputed Territories from ISIL offered the KRG and, to a much lesser extent, the central government opportunities to change the lines of control, a process often facilitated by LHSFs affiliated with the KRG or central government. The research conducted in Kirkuk, Qaraqosh, Tuz, and Zummar illustrated how different LHSFs played into this Baghdad-KRG competition.

There were competing sublayers of control even within Baghdad- and KRG-controlled areas. Within Kurdish-controlled areas, control was split between forces reporting to the two main Kurdish political parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) (best illustrated in the Kirkuk and Tuz research summaries). Within Baghdad-controlled areas, the real powerbrokers may have been one of the larger southern and predominantly Shi'a PMF forces. The PMF are formally part of the ISF and report to the Iraqi Prime Minister but in many cases give priority to the orders of their own leadership or their Iranian supporters. The research summaries on Tuz, Tal Afar, Mosul, Baiji, Shirqat, and the Tikrit area illustrate some of the tensions in the PMF-Baghdad relationship.

Another key point of inquiry was the impact of LHSFs on stability, the restoration of the rule of law, the level of displacement or return, and other community dynamics. In some areas, communities said that LHSFs had a positive influence, contributing to or ensuring security, allowing reconstruction and regular governance activities to take place, and enabling or directly providing aid to returning communities. However, these benefits were primarily perceived by communities from which the LHSF sought to draw its support. Rival communities often fell prey to these forces' criminal, abusive, and predatory behavior. LHSFs in control of checkpoints or local areas sometimes restricted the return of certain populations, either by directly refusing access or by deterring return through the destruction of property or intimidation of local populations. In some areas, particularly in Disputed Territories like Kirkuk, Tuz, Tal Afar, and the Ninewa Plains, LHSF forces' selective property destruction, prevention of returns, or abuses of other population groups played into existing political, ethnic, and sectarian divisions and appeared likely to seed future conflict.

This research was conducted from February through August 2017. Since that time, many of the control patterns have changed. Despite the opposition of Baghdad and criticism from other international partners and regional neighbors, KRG authorities held a referendum, which included the Disputed Territories, on Kurdish independence on September 25, 2017. An estimated 92 percent of those voting cast their ballot in favor of Kurdish independence from Iraq, but this move for greater Kurdish autonomy backfired. On October 16, 2017, ISF, backed by the PMF, launched operations to retake areas of the Disputed Territories that were under Kurdish control, reversing the estimated 40 percent gain in Kurdish-controlled territory.

Kurdish security forces retreated from almost the entire band of Disputed Territories, including areas profiled in this study – Rabi'a, Zummar, Kirkuk, and Tuz – as well as other areas including Sinjar and Khanaqin. Due to the fluid nature of these changes, this report reflects control patterns as of August 2017. This does not affect the relevance of the findings: although the micro-politics of control have changed in the case studies on Rabi'a, Zummar, Kirkuk and Tuz, the same issues of control and agency remain. Future research products will reflect the updated context.

Methodology

This study is part of a three-year project exploring LHSFs from a comprehensive security perspective, examining their impact on security dynamics, as well as on local community dynamics, rule of law, human rights, humanitarian concerns, and long-term state-building or other governance issues. The project is supported by the Netherlands Research Organisation (NWO) and implemented by a three-member research Consortium: the Global Public Policy institute (GPPi) based in Berlin, Germany; the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN); and the Institute for Regional and International Studies (IRIS) at the American University of Iraq in Sulaimani. This research study was led and implemented by GPPi, with significant support from IRIS.

GPPi and IRIS lead researchers consulted with local, national, and international stakeholders, researchers, and practitioners from December 2016 through February 2017 about the selection of research sites and development of the research design. Research sites were chosen based on the areas that showed the greatest range of LHSF actors and dynamics, that might best inform future policymaking and programming or reconstruction efforts, and that would be accessible and secure for conducting research. As a result of these consultations, the research team decided to conduct field research in Ninewa, Salah ad-Din, and Kirkuk.

A mixed team of national and international researchers documented LHSF patterns in 15 districts or subdistricts across the Iraqi governorates of Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah ad-Din.

Most of the research focused on areas that had been liberated for at least six months, where it was possible to observe some changes in governance or medium-term effects on issues like return or reconstruction. However, some of the research sites had been more recently liberated (e.g., Mosul) or were undergoing liberation (e.g., Shirqat in Salah ad-Din). It was not possible to visit areas under ISIL control, but secondary research was conducted on a limited number of these areas (e.g., Tal Afar, Hawija) where it helped understand LHSF patterns in nearby areas or to understand potential, future LHSF flashpoints.

The study was conducted between February 2017 and August 2017, but research was not conducted simultaneously at all sites throughout that period. For example, most of the research in Ninewa was conducted in February and early March 2017, with additional follow-up interviews in July and August 2017 to ensure that the material was current before the publication of preliminary findings on GPPi's website in August 2017. It took much longer to secure permission to conduct research or to identify researchers with appropriate experience and access levels in several areas in Salah ad-Din (Tikrit, Baiji, Shirqat) and in Kirkuk, so a greater share of the research in these locations was conducted between June and August 2017.

Interviews were focused on key stakeholders and informants and were not designed along a large-scale survey model. In most areas, researchers interviewed local officials with some oversight and knowledge of LHSFs, such as the governor and his security staff, the local head of police, local representatives of national security-related ministries, members of the local council, and sometimes other officials in charge of services affected by LHSFs (e.g., local electricity, health, or refugee affairs). Researchers also interviewed members of local communities who were aware of the activities of LHSF and some of the local impacts, including tribal or community leaders, those working with NGOs and IDP care or other services, and some of those directly affected by LHSF activities. Researchers also directly interviewed local leaders or members of LHSF groups wherever possible, as well as international monitors and researchers aware of LHSF activities in a particular location. Most interviewees preferred that their name not be identified, given the sensitivity of the information. This report has adopted the overall approach of not disclosing names, even where permission was given, unless the interviewee was a public figure and agreed to speak on record, in order to further protect the anonymity of all interviewees and guard against the risk of unforeseen local repercussions.

Interviews were conducted by a team of international and national researchers, in most cases jointly. However, in Tikrit, Shirqat, and Baiji, international researchers' access was restricted and only national researchers could conduct the interviews. Some researchers have requested that their names not be cited, given local security concerns.

Background: Emergence and Growth of LHSFs

Although Iraq now appears awash in pro-government militias, most of the sub-state or non-state groups that exist today are a relatively recent phenomenon. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Saddam Hussein's state security apparatus dominated the security landscape.[4] Except for a few notable exceptions, like the military wing of the Badr Organization or the Peshmerga, most of the active LHSFs emerged either after or in response to (1) the US invasion in 2003, (2) growing sectarian behavior by the Iraqi government and rising violence in response, or (3) the emergence of ISIL and its takeover of major Iraqi territories in 2014. These three key trends are important not only because they provide context for understanding what is happening in each of the field research areas, but also because these historical events prompted the emergence of many of the most significant LHSFs operating during the period of study.

2003 Invasion and its Aftermath

The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 had profound effects on the country's security landscape, reshaping the basic distribution and structure of force in ways that still dominate today. Many of the most prominent and significant LHSFs operating in the post-2014 period emerged in this immediate post-2003 period.

The decisive defeat of Saddam Hussein's army and the purging of Baathists from the post-2003 regime effectively dismantled the strong, state-centered security apparatus. With Saddam and his security state gone, Shi'a Islamic political parties that had previously operated in exile returned, bringing militias with them. The most notable of these armed groups is the Badr Brigades, which returned from exile in Iran after the fall of Saddam Hussein and formed their own political party, called the Badr Organization (Badr).[5] Badr and other emerging Shi'a militias began filling gaps in the nascent security infrastructure – protecting Shi'a sites and populations – and taking advantage of the rising pro-Shi'a political currents.[6] Badr members would go on to play an increasing role in Iraq's post-2003 security sector (including dominant positions in the Ministry of Interior), and Badr's military wing would much later form the largest and perhaps most prominent PMF group in the post-2014 context.

US occupation and the deteriorating security situation that followed also prompted the formation of new groups in a different way, as a rising number of opposition and insurgent groups emerged. The dissolution of Iraq's security forces left a security vacuum across Iraq (with the notable exception of Kurdish areas) that was easily exploited by insurgent groups. Meanwhile de-Baathification policies created a large reservoir of unemployed and disenfranchised (largely) Sunni Arab fighters

who were easy recruits for anti-US insurgent groups. While a full discussion of the insecurity and insurgency in post-2003 Baghdad-controlled Iraq is beyond the scope of this paper (and is well detailed elsewhere), it is worth noting that the Islamic State of Iraq formed during this period. Although subdued by US and Iraqi counterinsurgency activities from 2006 to 2008, many of the same fighters and disaffected, former senior members of the Baathist military and intelligence services would reunite as the core of ISIL in 2014.

The presence of foreign troops in Iraq also prompted the formation of new opposition Shi'a militias. Muqtada al-Sadr created the Mahdi Army (*jaysh al-mahdi*) in response to the US decision to shut down the main Sadrist newspaper in 2004 and the arrest of a prominent figure in the Sadrist movement.[7] The Mahdi Army was the strongest Shi'a insurgent group in Iraq in the 2000s until Sadr froze its military operations in 2008, which allowed him to participate in the electoral process. However, in 2014, after the call to rise up against ISIL, Sadr resuscitated the former Mahdi Army as the Peace Brigades (*saraya al-salam*), which joined the PMF and were instrumental in securing the holy shrines in Samarra after ISIL's onslaught in 2014.

Two other key PMF groups – which in addition to Badr form the three most significant PMF groups today – also arose at this time, both in opposition to US forces: *asa'ib ahl al-haqq* (or League of the Righteous, hereinafter AAH), and the Hezbollah Brigades (*kata'ib hizb allah*). When the Mahdi Army stood down in 2006, its special forces unit, AAH, broke off to be an independent force and continued attacks against US-led Coalition forces until their withdrawal. The Hezbollah Brigades also formed at this time and led a number of significant attacks against US forces. It is the only PMF group designated as a terrorist organization by the US, and its leader, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, who currently oversees overall PMF operations in Iraq, is designated as a 'global terrorist'.[8]

A group that emerged during the period of American occupation but was significantly absent from the anti-ISIL campaign were the Sunni tribal forces known collectively as the "Sons of Iraq," who are also referred to as the *sahwa,* or "Awakening." In 2006, as the insurgency against the US and the ISF was reaching its height, predominantly Sunni, but also some Shi'a, tribal leaders became disenchanted with the more radical, foreign elements leading the insurgency. Sunni tribal and religious leaders reached out to the US, asking for their support in policing their neighborhoods. With US funding and support, by mid-2007, these Awakening councils had organized into a full-fledged, Sunni tribal revolt of over 30 tribes, some 95,000 forces, against al-Qaeda in Iraq. As the success of the *sahwa* councils became apparent, the government of Iraq committed to incorporating them into state forces. Yet, Iraqi officials remained suspicious of these fighters – many of whom were former insurgents or former Baathists – and had integrated only two-thirds of *sahwa* members into the state apparatus when the US withdrew troops in December 2011. Of the fighters who were integrated, many were given only temporary positions or public jobs outside the security forces, a practice which was seen as demeaning. The government of Iraq stopped paying salaries and marginalized *sahwa* leaders from 2012 on. Meanwhile, between 2009 and 2013, a targeted killing campaign by ISIL against former members of "Awakening" killed at least 1,345 members, according to some estimates.[9] Although Sunni tribal forces ultimately were mobilized in response to the ISIL threat, they were slow to do so, and their mobilization did not reach the same level as the initial *sahwa* development.

Sectarianism Fuels New Instability

A second driver for the plethora of groups that exist today was the Iraqi state's increasingly sectarian behavior, which both created opportunities for more open development of Shi'a militias, and contributed to the growth of the radical Sunni extremist groups that would later emerge into ISIL.

The policy of de-Baathification (applied primarily against the Sunni community) and the misuse of anti-terrorism legislation against Sunni political leaders and citizens created the perception of a pro-Shi'a government acting against a marginalized Sunni community. Several of the main Shi'a militias developed equally powerful political wings and merged directly into the Iraqi government, exacerbating the perception of sectarian bias, particularly within the security forces. The Ministry of the Interior, which commands the police and intelligence, was led by figures associated with Badr from 2005 to 2006, and the demographic of the army's leadership also shifted to a majority Shi'a Arab. Badr forces were so thoroughly integrated into the Federal Police that it was difficult to distinguish one from the other, with Badr and the Federal Police conducting joint operations, and fighters going back and forth between the organizations as through a revolving door.

Critiques of a Shi'a-dominated and sectarian-minded government became more virulent as members of the security sector lashed out against Sunni populations. In Maliki's first term, there were already significant reports of Iraqi security forces under the control of sectarian-minded Shi'a leaders treating Sunni populations harshly. Between 2005 and 2006, local Shi'a security officers in Tal Afar were alleged to have committed a number of abuses against the local Sunni population, including torture, extra-judicial killings, and sectarian-motivated property destruction.[10] Such treatment – not only in Tal Afar but across Sunni areas – sparked sectarian tensions and violence and contributed to the emergence of strong al-Qaeda factions.[11]

The heavy-handed treatment of Sunnis only worsened in Maliki's second term, as US influence waned with the withdrawal of US troops and Iranian influence increased.[12] Maliki used anti-Baathist laws to target political rivals and swept anti-corruption officials and checks on his power out of the way.[13] On the security front, Maliki doubled down in appointing sectarian-minded officials in key local security positions. Many of them had strong affiliations with Shi'a militias, and the forces they controlled blended official and unofficial Shi'a forces.[14] In Sunni strongholds like Tikrit and Mosul, security forces, sometimes in partnership with Shi'a militias, engaged in hundreds of extrajudicial killings predominantly against Sunni residents, the torture of Sunni detainees, and other abuses.[15] In the words of lawyer and analyst Zaid al-Ali:

> "Groups of young men were arrested in waves, often in the middle of the night, and would be whisked to secret jails, often never to be seen again. Former Army officers, members of the Awakening, activists who complained too much about corruption, devout Iraqis who prayed a little too often at their local mosques — all were targeted. Many were never charged with crimes or brought before a judge. Under the pretext of trying to stop the regular explosions that blighted Baghdad, these individuals were subjected to severe abuse."[16]

Significantly for this study, Maliki's reign also further enabled the growth of Shi'a militias. Armed groups that had previously existed illegally and in the shadows acted more openly, often with sectarian agendas. In addition, rather than relying solely on the ISF, which were considered weak and ineffective, al-Maliki decided to expand Shi'a militia operations within Iraq to respond to the upsurge in violence. Shi'a militias, often acting at the government's behest, committed gross human rights abuses.[17] As anti-government protests and sit-ins challenging Maliki's power grabs became a common phenomenon in Iraq, Shi'a militias were deployed to contain the unrest, and there were serious cases of militias attacking peaceful protestors among other unlawful acts of violence.[18]

These abuses resulted in a mutually reinforcing spiral of violence. Repeated violence and the marginalization of Sunni populations fueled the re-emergence of radical Islamist Sunni movements, which had been tamped down in counter-insurgency efforts from 2006 and 2007. For the first time since the Sunni Awakening, the number of security incidents, such as the deployment of vehicle-borne IEDs, increased dramatically. The political and security environment that would enable ISIL's takeover was in place.

The Fight Against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant

While the political situation in Iraq escalated, Arab Spring protests across the border in Syria ignited a Civil War, which quickly deteriorated into a regional and transnational conflict. The Sunni grievances spawned by al-Maliki's sectarian policies and the security vacuum on both sides of the porous Iraq-Syria border created both the spark and the breathing space for what remained of the Islamic State of Iraq to be reborn as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

This re-grouped version of the Islamic State was significantly more brutal and territorially aggressive than its previous iteration. By early January 2014, ISIL had taken control of the Sunni Arab cities of Fallujah and Ramadi. Then, in the space of a week (between June 9 and June 16, 2014), ISIL took large swaths of territory in Ninewa, Salah ad-Din, and Kirkuk, as Iraqi forces abandoned their posts and fled. On June 10, after a pitched battle, ISIL assumed control of Iraq's second biggest city, Mosul, and began moving west toward strategic areas on the Syrian and Kurdish borders, in Tal Afar district. ISIL fighters simultaneously began moving east. In a few days, ISIL expanded its control over Tikrit and much of the north of Salah ad-Din governorate, as well as Hawija and surrounding areas of Kirkuk governorate. On June 12, ISIL executed several hundred Shi'a recruits of the Iraqi army who were stationed at Camp Speicher, just north of Tikrit, and distributed a propaganda video publicizing what came to be known as the "Camp Speicher massacre."[19] The incident enraged the Shi'a community and became a rallying event for Shi'a forces.[20]

The Iraqi forces had crumbled in the face of this onslaught, but ISIL's takeover of Mosul, and its presence within striking distance of Baghdad soon galvanized a response, one that would result in the creation of many of the LHSFs that are the focus of this study. On the Baghdad side, in response to the fall of Mosul, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani issued a *fatwa*, a popular call to arms against ISIL. The *fatwa* appeared to be originally intended to strengthen recruitment into and support for the ISF; however,

Timeline of ISIL Captured Territories

January 2-4, 2014	ISIL seizes Fallujah, parts of Ramadi.
June 8-10, 2014	ISIL captures Mosul; Iraqi control of Northern Iraq collapses.
June 10-11, 2014	ISIL takes over Baiji and Tikrit in Salah ad-Din; Hawija up to Taza Khurmatu in Kirkuk.
June 11-12, 2014	ISIL takes over much of Tuz in Salah ad-Din, Rabi'a and some areas north of Mosul.
June 15-16, 2014	Tal Afar falls to ISIL after heated battle.
August 2-3, 2014	Sinjar, Zummar and the Mosul Dam fall to ISIL.
August 6, 2014	ISIL captures the southern Ninewa Plains, resulting in nearly full control of Ninewa.

the call ultimately prompted a mass mobilization effort into an independent and parallel force, dubbed the Popular Mobilization Force (PMF). All of the pre-existing Shi'a militias described earlier participated, plus dozens of new groups and forces.[21] The core of these forces are the many prominent Shi'a militias already discussed – including the Badr Organization, the Hezbollah Brigades, AAH, and the Peace Brigades. These were also the first groups to swing into action, galvanized by the fall of Mosul, the Camp Speicher massacre, and Sistani's *fatwa*. As ISIL closed in on Samarra,[22] threatening to destroy sacred Shi'a shrines in the area, Shi'a PMF forces rushed to the city's defense and were able to hold off ISIL.[23] As ISIL surrounded the nearby Shi'a Turkmen city of Amerli in Tuz district, Shi'a PMF helicoptered in elite forces to defend the city.[24]

On the Kurdish side, attacks on multiple Disputed Territories where Kurdish populations lived triggered an early KSF response. Joint regional brigades and forces loyal to one of the two main Kurdish political parties, the KDP and the PUK, engaged ISIL in different areas along the KRG border. ISIL expansion in Diyala governorate (e.g., Jalawla and Saadiya) was countered by PUK forces in August 2014.[25] In Ninewa governorate, KDP-commanded Peshmerga responded to the initial ISIL threat and the fall of Mosul by forming a defensive line across the Ninewa Plains, from Sinjar in the west (which they already effectively controlled) to Hamdaniyya in the southern Ninewa Plains.[26] Although they promised to defend the area, on August 6 the Peshmerga announced that they were unable to hold the line and withdrew from large parts of the territory.[27] What followed has been described as a genocide of Iraq's minority communities, [28] as Christian, Chaldo-Assyrian, Yezidi, Shabak, Kakai, and other minority communities were subjected to torture, public executions, crucifixions, kidnappings, and sexual slavery.[29] This experience – abandonment first by Iraqi and then by Kurdish forces, leaving these communities to face the threat of annihilation alone – created a strong ethos of self-defense and self-protection among at least some of these groups. Many of the minority LHSFs that emerged after 2014 were borne out of communities' sense that they would only be safe when protected by their own.

Although the PKK and its affiliated forces were not as prominent in the research areas examined and so are not documented in great detail in this report, they are worth noting briefly here.[30] The PKK played a significant role in the fight against ISIL in Syria via its local affiliate, the People's Protection Units (YPG). The YPG were also widely lauded for saving thousands of Yezidis in Sinjar, Iraq, by opening an escape corridor in August 2014 to Rojava in Syria. The success of the PKK and its affiliates in Iraq and Syria created a new center of gravity for LHSFs that did not sympathize with the KRG's Peshmerga or Baghdad, especially in areas from which the Kurdish Peshmerga fell back during ISIL's advance.

The remains of an ISIL bomb-making factory inside the choir practice room of a Christian church in Qaraqosh, Hamdaniyya.

International Actors' Support

A final factor in understanding the landscape of LHSFs today is the role played by international and regional actors in mobilizing these different local and substate forces as part of the fight against ISIL. The fall of Mosul, the takeover of Shi'a areas and massacres of Shi'a populations (including the Camp Speicher massacre), and threats to the Shi'a shrines around Samarra provoked an immediate and significant response from Iran. As noted, Iran had long been a backer of the most prominent Shi'a PMF forces, who would be critical in the early fighting against ISIL. As these Shi'a PMF forces deployed to the ISIL frontlines in June 2014, Iranian forces and leadership were also directly

engaged. The engagement was so significant and hands-on that Qassem Suleimani – commander of the Iranian Quds Force, the external arm of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps – was present at the first major PMF victories over ISIL in Amerli (Salah ad-Din governorate) in September 2014 and Jurf al-Sahkr (Babel governorate) in October 2014; he was also present in operations in and around Tikrit (Salah ad-Din governorate) between March and April 2015.[31] Iranian and Lebanese forces led the training of PMF forces in several military camps, including in Taza base (south of Kirkuk).

With the official recognition of the PMF and corresponding Iraqi state budget subsidies, the demand for Iranian salary support for Shi'a PMF forces decreased. However, Iran reportedly continued to provide training and guidance to these militias via military advisors (in the range of hundreds), and there were some reports of direct salary support for some groups via Iran's Quds Force.[32]

Turkey was also relatively quick to provide support, establishing a military camp at Bashiqa, which was used as a training base. Turkish forces directly contributed to training the 3,000-strong force under former Ninewa Governor Atheel al-Nujaifi, the Ninewa Guards, which formally became part of the PMF in 2016. They also reportedly provided weaponry and salaries, although Turkey and al-Nujaifi deny this level of support. Baghdad has repeatedly renounced Turkish military presence in Iraq.

The fall of Mosul and the assault on Iraq's minorities in the Ninewa Plains described above spurred greater Western support and intervention, including significant engagement via airstrikes and greater support and training to Iraqi and Kurdish forces. Both the US and other European forces provided significant training, weaponry, and support to Iraqi forces and to unified Ministry of Peshmerga forces.[33] In addition, the US initiated a new support program for Sunni tribal fighters, known within the US government as the Tribal Mobilization Forces (TMF) and among locals as the tribal *hashd* or *hashd al-asha'ir*. Somewhat similar to the Sunni Awakening, the program was designed to support Sunni tribal leaders interested in fighting against ISIL. Although salaries were formally funded through Baghdad and the TMF was integrated fully into the PMF, the program was distinguishable from other PMF units in that the US-supported tribal fighters received direct training and support from Coalition forces.[34]

As a result of all of these recent events, by the time of research, numerous local and substate forces were mobilized and engaged in clearing and holding territory recaptured from ISIL. The subsequent section profiles some of the most important groups or typologies of forces that appeared in the field research.

Who's Who: Key LHSF Groups

As the brief review of recent historical events has illustrated, militias, regional, and sub-state security forces have been a common feature of Iraq since at least the US invasion in 2003 but have grown significantly in size and importance since 2014. By 2017, the groups active in the areas of research tended to fall into one of three main categories of LHSFs:[35] Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF); Kurdish Security Forces (KSF); and a range of local forces, which tended to affiliate with and take direction from one of the two larger LHSF categories or from ISF. This subsection will describe some of the key forces or examples of these types of forces in each category, most of which feature as actors in the case study areas.

Popular Mobilization Forces

As noted above, the PMF structure was created to try to harness the mass mobilization response to al-Sistani's June 2014 *fatwa*. The PMF, or *al-hashd ash-sha'abi* as they are popularly known, have since grown into a nominally state force that is nearly equivalent to Iraqi forces in both size and salary positions (officially), but still with very loose state control. In November 2016, Parliament passed a law legalizing the PMF, granting them equivalent ranks and benefits with the ISF and placing them under the same military jurisdiction. As of February 2016, the Iraqi parliament approved a $2 billion budget for the PMF – double what was spent in 2015 – and included planned salaries for 120,000 members that year.[36] The actual number of fighting forces may be as few as half of that number, but the official ranks are comparable to the 150,000 ISF, and the 108,000 Peshmerga front-line soldiers.[37]

As of early 2017, many estimated that there were some 50 subgroups in the PMF, although new groups continued to emerge and grow throughout the course of the research. The largest and most influential forces within the PMF are those that pre-existed the 2014 *fatwa*, including the Badr Organization, AAH, Hezbollah Brigades, and the Khorasani Brigades. Their leadership and most of their forces tend to be Shi'a who follow the Iranian interpretation of political Islam (*wilayat al-faqih*). Partly because of their association with Iran, they tend to be associated with a Shi'a sectarian agenda. These militias are the best organized, best equipped, and best paid, and they have played a leadership role among other groups within the PMF. The leader of Badr Organization, Hadi al-Amiri, and the leader of the Hezbollah Brigades, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, significantly directed inter-PMF cooperation. Although there was imperfect command and control in the PMF and no direct linear responsibility, they were *de facto* responsible for much of the PMF's tactical and political decision-making and may have directed operations for multiple PMF groups, including groups they did not lead. The Popular Mobilization Commission, led by National Security Advisor Falih al-Fayyadh, formally reports to the prime minister's office. However, the largest and most long-standing Shi'a PMF groups had a reputation for being more responsive to their

own PMF leaders than to Iraqi forces and officials. These larger and more influential Iranian-supported Shi'a PMF groups play an important role in the subsequent analysis. Each has different leadership, and a slightly different agenda and connotation, and so it is worth distinguishing them. However, in parts of the subsequent analysis, these groups are referred to collectively as the Shi'a PMF to illustrate overall patterns of conduct:

- **Badr Organization** (*Munazzama Badr; al-Jinah al-Askari*),[38] numbering 20,000 in February 2016,[39] is led by Hadi al-Amiri, who also plays a significant role in the leadership of the PMF as a whole. It is the longest-standing and largest PMF, formed by Iraqi exiles in Iran during the 1980s (as the "Badr Brigades").[40] In the areas of research, it had a reputation for better conduct than other groups in this category; however, there were serious allegations of rights abuses, particularly regarding unlawful detentions and the poor treatment and abuse of detainees.[41]

- **Asa'ib Ahl al-Haqq** (League of the Righteous, AAH), was formed in 2006 as a splinter group from the Mahdi Army and had an estimated strength of 5,000-10,000 fighters as of March 2015. Its forces were accused of significant rights violations throughout their participation in the anti-ISIL campaign (summary executions, kidnappings, arbitrary detentions, torture, looting, mass destruction of houses) in areas such as Tuz district, Muqdadiya (in Diyala), and Tikrit.[42] AAH had also developed and maintained local force auxiliary groups in many of the areas of research (e.g., Tikrit area, other parts of Salah ad-Din). Several current or former commanders were designated by the US as 'global terrorists' for attacks on US forces from 2006-2009.[43]

- **Hezbollah Brigades** (*Kata'ib Hizb Allah*)[44] were formed around 2007 and totaled an estimated 20,000 forces as of February 2016.[45] They have been strongly supported by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Lebanese Hezbollah for training and advice. They are the only PMF listed as a terrorist group by the US (since 2009), and their leader, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, was designated a global terrorist in 2009.[46] Al-Muhandis is also the vice president of the PMF committee and its head of operations.[47] The group has faced allegations of sectarian retribution[48] and human rights violations in several operations (summary executions, kidnappings, arbitrary detentions, torture, looting, destruction of houses) in areas such as Tuz district, Muqdadiya (in Diyala), and Tikrit.[49]

- **Imam Ali Brigades** (*Kata'ib al-Imam Ali*)[50] were formed after the 2014 *fatwa* and have close links to the Hezbollah Brigades and Iran's Quds Force. They are well-trained and equipped and have engaged in significant frontline activities; they also reportedly committed significant human rights violations, including the beheading and burning of prisoners.[51] They have trained two mixed Shabak units (including some Chaldo-Assyrian forces), as well as a Yezidi group, the Sinjar Brigade.[52]

- **Khorasani Brigades** (*Saraya al-Khorasani*) are among the closest of the PMFs to Iran, allegedly acting as a conduit for all Iranian training and logistical aid.[53]

They were founded in 2013 by an Iranian Arab commander[54] and carry the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps's (IRGC) logo. The Khorasani Brigades are primarily a combat unit and, unlike other PMF, generally did not seek local affiliates or held roles in areas where they were engaged. They reportedly committed serious human rights violations in Tuz district and Diyala, including targeting Sunni residents and taking competing Peshmerga forces hostage.[55]

There are also a number of other prominent, predominantly Shi'a groups that fall under the PMF umbrella but are not aligned with Iran. Most are closer to the Iraqi state, although with varying degrees of independence. Some, like the Peace Brigades, openly claim that they do not accept orders from the Iraqi government, while groups linked to the Iraqi shrines (*'ataba*), collectively called Sistani's *hashd*, fought closely alongside ISF in most operations. This category of Shi'a PMF is also different because most commentators assume that unlike the Iranian-backed groups, these forces would be more willing or ready to demobilize. The three most prominent examples are:

- **Peace Brigades** (*Saraya as-Salam*, est. 14,000 fighters) were formerly Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army, active from 2003 to 2013. When Sadr stood down to join politics, his forces (previously engaged in targeting American soldiers)[56] also did but were reactivated after the 2014 *fatwa*. They are known for stopping ISIL's advance on Samarra in 2014 and were responsible for holding Samarra long after ISIL was pushed back (up to the time of writing). Although these forces were generally known for better conduct among the PMF groups, there were alleged to have engaged in the mass destruction of houses in Amerli; they were also accused of abuses against Sunnis and of overseeing death squads in other areas.[57]

- **Abbas Combat Division** (est. 7,000 fighters) was formed in 2014 in response to the *fatwa*, with the specific intention of protecting Shi'a shrines.[58] It is formally tied to the Abbas shrine in Kerbala and is thus one component of "Sistani's *hashd.*" Despite its Shi'a orientation, the force has a more neutral reputation and also includes a sizeable number of Sunni members. It also had close ties with the Iraqi army, from which it received most of its weaponry and training.

- **Ali al-Akbar Brigade** (est. 5,000 fighters) was formed through Sistani's *fatwa*, also in an effort to protect Shi'a shrines. They maintained strong ties to the Iraqi army, often operating alongside them. This relationship was particularly notable in operations in Ninewa, in which other Shi'a PMF groups were held back. The brigade also had a reportedly higher inclusion of Sunni members, as high as 20 percent by one estimate.[59]

While most PMF forces drew predominantly from Shi'a populations in southern Iraq, after 2014 sizeable Sunni forces and other minority groups were also incorporated under the PMF umbrella. This was particularly the case after the PMF were legalized in 2016 as the only legitimate group to have a non-state or sub-state armed force. Examples of these groups will be discussed below in the summary of key local or minority forces.

Kurdish Security Forces

The Kurdish Security Forces, also referred to as Peshmerga, comprise a range of forces, including traditional army units, military and intelligence units, and others functioning more like local police. They had a total estimated strength of between 190,000 and 250,000 fighters, but these figures included substantial numbers of ghost soldiers and part-time soldiers.[60] The Peshmerga's level of command, control, and organization in some ways puts it closer to a state force. However, command and control fracture down to a political party and ultimately to a personal commander-relationship level. They are the only legally recognized regional force under Article 117 of the 2005 Iraqi Constitution, which allows regions to establish their own internal security services as the "police, security forces and guards of the region."

Kurdish Peshmerga fighters undergo international training to fight ISIL.

Although nominally united as the KRG's forces, the two largest fighting forces in the Peshmerga, Division 70 (est. 48,000 fighters) and Division 80 (est. 50,000 fighters), continue to report respectively to the PUK's and KDP's political bureaus.[61] There are also other subgroups within these structures. For example, within KDP's Division 80, there is a specially trained, paramilitary unit of the police force (sometimes described as a gendarmerie) known as the Zerevani, KDP Asayish, a police and intelligence unit for the KRG, also tended to be co-deployed with Division 80 and Zerevani in KDP-controlled areas. On the PUK side, Division 70 units were often complemented by PUK counter-terrorism forces (called the "Deja Terror" forces) and PUK Asayish.

A nominally independent, integrated Peshmerga force of 14 brigades, called the Regional Guard Brigades (est. 40,000 forces), was created in 2009 and 2010 and reports to the Ministry of Peshmerga (MoP). At the brigade level, leadership positions are distributed according to a 50-50 principle: brigades headed by KDP commanders had PUK deputy commanders, and vice-versa. In practice, however, most Regional Guard Brigades still broke down along party lines. For example, the political parties and not the MOP-appointed sector commanders are responsible for ground operations.[62] Cautious about further fueling this internal political competition, international Coalition members providing support to Peshmerga during the anti-ISIL campaign have attempted to only provide training and equipment to these unified Regional Guard Brigades (as opposed to Divisions 70 and 80). However, they have limited actual control over who is nominated to be trained, and both parties have argued that the other has benefited more from international support.[63]

Peshmerga forces also incorporated a number of minority units or brigades under their ranks, including Shabak, Kakai, Yezidi and Christian or Chaldo-Assyrian forces. There is generally little information available about these groups and their conduct in war. They generally reported to the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs and worked within the KDP-led structure. Examples of some of these minority forces will be discussed below in the following section.

Local or Minority Forces

Although the more prominent substate forces mobilized were Kurdish forces and the predominantly Shi'a PMF forces from the south, small, local forces from the areas threatened by ISIL (and nationwide) also joined the fight. The vast majority of these forces were on the payroll of or had some line of administration or supervision to one of the larger Shi'a forces (such as Badr, AAH, etc.) in the PMF, or, on the Kurdish side, to the KDP or PUK forces. As such, each of these groups arguably could have been discussed as a PMF or as part of Kurdish forces. Yet while loyalty to these Shi'a PMF or Kurdish forces ran deep due to co-ethnicity or long-standing cooperation in some cases, in others, local forces were opportunistic and loyalty was fluid. Given this, it is analytically helpful to introduce these local and minority forces as a distinct category, both to understand potential flips in allegiance, and also to outline the larger forces' competing strategies for local affiliation.

Although there is tremendous diversity in the nature of and role played by local forces, it is helpful to outline some of the patterns presented by each community. This approach helps illustrate the way that political splits or geographic diversity within these communities created opportunities for larger political and security actors to co-opt local forces.

Sunni Forces

Many of the areas seized by ISIL were Sunni majority areas, and so deliberate efforts were made to mobilize members of the Sunni-majority populations – primarily Sunni tribal actors – to fight alongside the Shi'a-dominated PMF and ISF or the Kurdish forces.

The biggest effort was a US-sponsored initiative in Anbar and Ninewa that sought to recruit tribal forces to play a role as local "hold" forces once their areas were liberated from ISIL. Internally among US circles it was known as the Tribal Mobilization Force (TMF), an acronym that will be used subsequently to distinguish it from other forms of Sunni tribal PMF. As of summer 2017, there were an estimated 16,000 TMF in Anbar[64] and 18,000 in Ninewa (at least on payroll).[65] They received salaries ($500 per month) through the Iraqi government, like other PMF, and were eligible for US training and light weapons, although many were deployed immediately without training (for example, of 18,000 deployed in Ninewa only 6,000 were trained as of summer 2017). The case studies in Qayyara and Mosul offer examples of TMF acting as hold forces (primarily guard and checkpoint duties) in action.

The TMF program was not authorized in Salah ad-Din (despite requests from the US and from tribal forces in that area). As a result, Sunni forces were mobilized directly within the PMF at much lower estimated numbers (2,000-3,000) in Salah ad-Din and Sunni areas in other governorates. With only a few major exceptions (e.g., forces under former Ninewa Governor Nujaifi's control), they did so through and under the control of one of the larger Shi'a PMF forces (frequently Badr and AAH), but sometimes also other groups. Larger PMF organizations tended to provide weaponry and training, as well as administering and controlling these groups (including disbursement of salaries). There are strong examples of these dynamics in the Tikrit and Shirqat case studies. All of these groups, regardless of their affiliation or recruitment path, tended to be known locally as "tribal *hashd*" or *hashd al-asha'ir*.

Although formally under the PMF umbrella since 2017, it is worth distinguishing the Ninewa Guards (formerly known as the *al-hashd al-watani*). They were founded in July 2014 by Atheel al-Nujaifi, the then-governor of Ninewa, and drew most of their estimated 3,000 fighters from Mosul area communities, including from former Mosul police units. They were predominantly Sunni but also included Kurds and other minorities from Ninewa. Initially formed outside the official Iraqi force mobilization (and thus considered an illegal armed group), they received training and reportedly some salary and equipment from Turkish forces.[66] However, this has been denied by both Turkey and al-Nujaifi. After the PMF law was passed, they joined the PMF umbrella but retained a degree of independence. Unlike other subordinate PMF groups, they had no strong relationship with any of the large Shi'a PMF, indeed were actively antagonistic. They often fought or undertook stabilization independently, demonstrating a higher level of capacity and leadership, while coordinating with Iraqi army units.

Finally, a handful of units of Sunni Arab tribal forces from Kurdish-dominated areas joined Kurdish forces. In 2017, KDP Peshmerga forces created the "Jazeera Brigade" to incorporate tribal fighters from Kurdish-controlled Tal Afar district in Ninewa (hailing from all four subdistricts: Rabi'a, Tal Afar, Ayadiya, and Zummar). Although nominally designed to hold areas cleared by KDP-aligned Kurdish forces, in practice the Jazeera Brigade's level of security responsibility was light, and it appeared to be more of a paid link between local tribal populations (primarily Sunni Arab) and the occupying/controlling Kurdish forces. An interesting example of a former TMF unit that switched over to the Jazeera force, the Ninewa Lions, is included in the Rabi'a case study below.

Shi'a Turkmen Forces

Shi'a Turkmen forces were smaller in number than the Sunni tribal forces, but in many ways played a more significant role and had a larger impact on political and security dynamics, at least in Salah ad-Din and Kirkuk. Shi'a Turkmen forces were recruited by the larger Shi'a PMF forces, such as Badr, and helped to extend their influence and control in local areas. The most significant area of Shi'a Turkmen activities was in the strip of territory from the southern parts of Kirkuk governorate to the adjacent Tuz district of Salah ad-Din governorate. It is also notable that the Shi'a Turkmen forces tended to be better trained and armed than many local forces. They held territories on their own, if still ultimately reporting to senior PMF commanders. Two of the most significant of these forces were Brigades 16 and 52, which were estimated to have a combined strength of more than 3,000 fighters. Brigade 52 was exclusively Badr; Brigade 16 included a range of Turkmen proxies of Shi'a Arab PMF (Hezbollah Brigades, Peace Brigades, AAH, etc.). Turkmen PMF were at the forefront of many of the significant human rights abuses while they held territory or engaged in operations with Shi'a PMF, including summary executions, kidnappings, arbitrary detention, torture, looting, and the mass destruction of houses. For example, as detailed in the summaries below, Tuz saw harassment, abuse, and the destruction of the property of Arab residents; in addition, the return of Sunni Arab residents in Tuz and Kirkuk was blocked.

Shi'a Turkmen forces were also expected to play an important role in Tal Afar, which historically had a large Shi'a Turkmen population. Tal Afar was under ISIL control during the period of research, but the larger Shi'a PMF forces were making gains on the outskirts of the city and had declared their intention to take part in liberating Tal Afar. These dynamics were similar to those preceding Shi'a Turkmen mobilization and control tactics in parts of Tuz.

Shabak Forces

Shabak forces played a similar role in Ninewa to that of the Shi'a Turkmen in Kirkuk and eastern Salah ad-Din. Although the Shabak forces were organized into the 30th Brigade of the PMF (roughly 1,000 forces) and had their own political sponsor and direct commander,[67] like the Shi'a Turkmen forces, they tended to act as local auxiliaries under the direction and control of larger Shi'a PMF forces. They were under the leadership and direction of Badr in practice. Although the force was more predominantly made up of Shi'a Shabak and Shi'a Arab fighters, the 30th Brigade included a notorious sub-force known as the Babylon Brigade, led by a Chaldean commander, Rayan al-Kildani. Although al-Kildani is himself Chaldean, the majority of fighters in his sub-unit were Shi'a Arab. These Shabak forces were actively involved in both frontline fighting and holding areas and gained a reputation for harsh treatment and retaliation against Sunni Arabs.[68] This unit continues to control many of the checkpoints in Bartela and on the outskirts of Mosul, but the brigade's units also accompanied PMF in operations in other parts of the Ninewa province (including in Qayyara and Nimrud).

Christian, Assyrian and Chaldean Forces

A number of groups also sprung out of the small, Christian-majority areas of the Ninewa Plains. Iraq's Christian population has a long and complex history, and many communities identify more along ethnic lines or by their specific religious denomination or political party, than as Christians. Much of this study will follow the usage in standard news reporting and refer to these groups collectively as Christian groups; however, it is worth noting that many of the groups identify more as Chaldeans, Assyrians, or Syriacs.

There are four different Christian or Chaldo-Assyrian forces that come up most commonly in discussions of security dynamics in Hamdaniya and the surrounding Ninewa Plains areas. Each of the four is aligned with one or more of the seven main Christian, or Chaldo-Assyrian political parties, and their members drew from across the Ninewa Plains. Moreover, each sought protection and patronage from either Kurdish forces or from Baghdad:

- **Ninewa Plains Protection Unit (NPU)**: The NPU are an Assyrian Democratic Union-sponsored force that officially come under the PMF umbrella, but, unlike the Babylon Brigade (discussed below), they had some degree of independence and a different agenda from the larger Shi'a PMF units. They were the only Christian militia to receive official, US-led Tribal Mobilization Force (TMF) training and currently hold the southern Ninewa Plains around Qaraqosh. Some estimate that they have as many as 3,000 forces, but interviews suggested that real number, or number of those on active duty, is far lower.[69]

- **Ninewa Plains Guard Forces (NPGF)**: The largest and longest-standing force, the NPGF boasts approximately 2,500 fighters and has been around in some form since 2004. They were initially formed as a neighborhood watch force to protect churches and religious sites and have been supported by KDP officials since that time. Following the ISIL attack and crisis, the NPGF forces increased and received basic training organized by the Ministry of Peshmerga. They are now officially part of the KDP Zeravani, according to NPGF leaders interviewed.

- **Ninewa Plain Forces (NPF)**: Shortly after ISIL took over Hamdaniya in August 2014, the Bet-Nahrain Democratic Party and the Bet-Nahrain Democratic Union reached an agreement with the Ministry of Peshmerga to form a Christian unit under the Peshmerga.[70] They tended to act as an auxiliary or supporting unit fighting alongside KDP Peshmerga, including in some frontline activities. Together with the NPGF, they were assigned to help hold the northern Ninewa Plains areas near Tal as-Soqf.[71]

- **Dwekh Nawsha** (literal meaning, "the one who sacrifices")[72]: The Dwekh Nawsha are connected to the Assyrian Patriotic Party, and at the time of research were mostly operating near Tel as-Soqf, north of Mosul. The number of fighters was estimated to range from 50 to 100 men (with one outside estimate suggesting as many as 250 potential volunteers) and includes a handful of international

volunteers.[73] They reportedly received some weapons and funding from the KDP, but, unlike the NPGF and NPF, they were not designated official sub-units of Kurdish forces.

Many of these forces relied on donations from abroad, both from private charities and some foreign states (notably including explicit allocations from the US Congress to Christian militias).[74]

Other Forces

This section has summarized some of the key groups that feature in the case studies and analyses below. However, a number of other groups were active in areas outside but near to the case study. For example, although Yezidi forces do not figure prominently in this analysis (because Sinjar, the main area where they operate, was not among the case studies), they exhibited similar patterns of mobilization and patronage to the Christian, Shabak, and other minority forces. Different Yezidi forces affiliated variously with PMF, the PKK, and the two KDP parties and frequently changed sides to gain political advantages or resources.[75] For example, the formerly PKK-backed Sinjar Protection Forces (*Hêzen Parastina Shingal*, HPS), which played a significant role in providing a safe protection corridor for Yezidis to flee, later changed sides and was on Baghdad's payroll as part of the PMF. They were strongly hostile to the Peshmerga-backed Yezidi forces, some 10,000 strong, operating in the same area.[76] During the case study in Rabi'a, researchers also encountered the Rojava Peshmerga, an estimated 3,000 to 6,000 Syrian Kurdish soldiers who had fled the Syrian Army and received training from KDP-Peshmerga.[77] Because they had differences with Kurdish forces in Syria, they conducted operations against ISIL in Iraq.[78]

Geographic Case Studies

The primary goal of this study was to assess the impact of LHSFs on local and national dynamics by capturing a snapshot of LHSF engagement in a range of different communities and areas. Each case study will discuss the LHSFs active in each area, the level of control or autonomy each possessed, and their relationships to each other or to Iraqi or Kurdish forces. Each case study will also highlight any significant consequences of the LHSFs' presence or activities. For example, in some areas, LHSFs blocked return, caused displacement, or committed serious human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings and detention. In other areas, LHSFs were less problematic in terms of protection and stability but caused repercussions for governance or community dynamics in other ways. Even where there were no immediate consequences, in some of the case study locations the mobilization of local and substate forces along ethnic, sectarian, or political lines posed and continues to pose the risk of provoking future conflict and instability.

Each case study below is a condensed version of the more detailed, initial case studies published in August and September 2017, which are still available on GPPi's website at www.gppi.net/publications/iraq-after-isil. More details on the background context, the role of ISIL in each community, and specific allegations against LHSFs are available in the online version of each case study.

Ninewa

At the time of research, Ninewa governorate exhibited some of the most diverse and fast-moving LHSF dynamics. When research began in February 2017, the fight for Mosul was still ongoing and Tal Afar was still in ISIL's hands. Areas south of Mosul had been liberated in late 2016 for the most part and were in varying stages of recovery and stabilization, while those north of Mosul, along the Syrian border, had been in firm Kurdish control for more than two years. In addition to Iraqi and Peshmerga forces, who played the predominant role in retaking Ninewa, a multiplicity of ethnic and sectarian groups wanted a role in the fight for local territory – from Sunni Arab tribal forces to Chaldo-Assyrian, Christian, Yezidi, or Shabak militias in the Ninewa Plains to Shi'a Turkmen and local Kurdish forces in northwest Ninewa. These different forces partnered alternately with the ISF, the Federal Police, Peshmerga forces, or local police to exert local control in different ways.

One group that was not absent but was more muted in Ninewa were the Shi'a PMF groups, which had played a dominant role in the liberation and holding of Salah ad-Din and Anbar governorates. There were significant allegations that as Shi'a PMF took part in operations to liberate Sunni Arab areas like Falluja, Tikrit, and Baiji, they had retaliated against the Sunni Arab community, carrying out extrajudicial detentions, killings, and other abuses, and engaging in mass property destruction and looting.[79] Even where abuses were not alleged, given past sectarian conflict, putting

Shi'a militias in control of Sunni-dominant cities had provoked political backlash. Given the sensitivity surrounding the Mosul operation, a decision was made to keep Shi'a PMF on the fringes of operations in Ninewa. They had no significant formal role in either clearing or holding liberated areas, particularly in Mosul. Nonetheless, at the time of writing, Shi'a PMF had taken a holding position around the Turkmen city of Tal Afar, and had an informal, de facto presence or influence on surrounding areas via their relationships with local PMF groups or the Federal Police.

Mosul

Estimated Pre-ISIL Demographics

Population: 1,377,000
Ethnic composition: 65.7% Arab (61.2% Sunni and 5.5% Shiite), Kurds (27.4%), Turkmen (3.3%), Christians (2.1%), Shabak (0.9%), and Yezidis (0.6%)

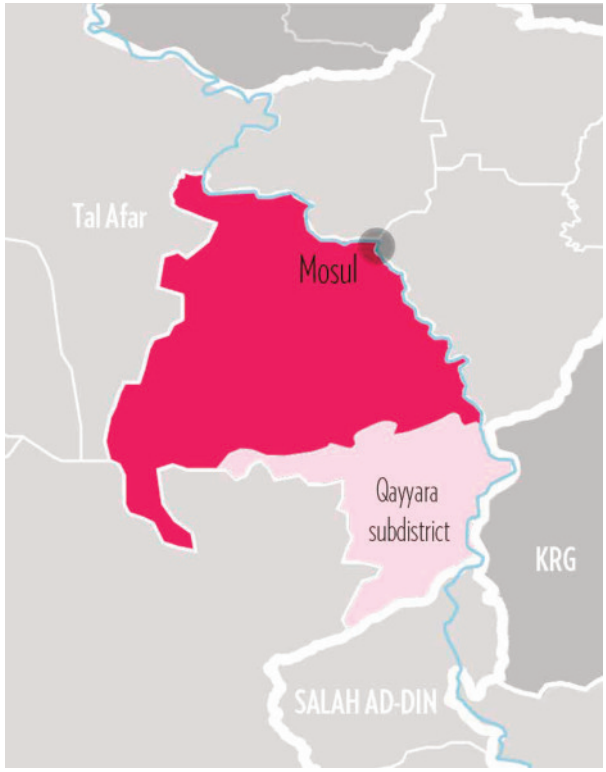
ISIL Take-Over and Expulsion

Date taken: June 10, 2014
Date reclaimed: January 24, 2017 (East Mosul); July 11, 2017 (West Mosul)
Forces engaged: Full range of ISF and Iraqi agencies, notably Army 16th Division and Iraqi security forces

Current Situation (as of August 2017)

Overall control: Nominally ISF; no meaningful control/RoL
LHSFs present: Small number of Tribal TMFs; PMF officially not allowed but de facto present in small numbers; Ninewa Guards forces stationed on the northern outskirts of Mosul
Key issues:

- Continued counter-attacks by ISIL, concerns about sleeper cells, criminality, and other rule of law issues
- Risk of local political backlash triggered by increasing presence of Shi'a PMF groups
- Risk of competition between different LHSF groups



The capture of Mosul, Iraq's second largest city (or third according to some estimates)[80] was the crowning achievement in ISIL's rapid takeover.[81] Long an important historical center both in Iraq and the region, the victory was of huge symbolic importance. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIL, declared a new Islamic caliphate in front of Mosul's most famous site, the 12th-century Grand Mosque of al-Nuri.[82] In addition, with the seizure of Mosul, huge weapons caches fell into ISIL's hands, and the backbone of Iraqi government control in northern and central Iraq was shattered, facilitating ISIL's easy conquest of other surrounding areas.

However, while an enormous coup for ISIL, the seizure of Mosul was ultimately what galvanized the mass mobilization against ISIL, beginning with al-Sistani's June

2014 *fatwa* and ultimately ending with their defeat. It also gave rise to and multiplied many of the LHSFs of interest to this study, dramatically reshaping the political and security dynamics in this part of Iraq.

At the time of research in February and March 2017, Mosul was divided: west Mosul was still under ISIL control, but Coalition operations to retake it had just commenced.[83] East Mosul had been recently liberated, in January 2017. The security environment was still volatile, and rule of law had not been fully restored. Although operations and the post-liberation "holding" of Mosul were led by Iraqi state forces to a much higher degree than in other areas,[84] the lack of full civilian control and regular rule of law, as well as the scale of the security tasks, created some official roles and even more unofficial opportunities for a range of LHSFs. Mosul's geopolitical importance incentivized domestic, regional, and international actors either to engage directly or to establish or support local forces. Small numbers of the Sunni TMF forces (the Sunni tribal mobilization program sponsored by the US), were present, although most were recruited from other parts of Ninewa, rather than from communities within Mosul. Sunni TMF forces also participated in securing West Mosul once it was liberated.[85]

Turkish-trained and -supported forces under the former Governor Atheel al-Nujaifi, the Ninewa Guards force, were also present. Although formally part of the PMF umbrella, they remained independent from the PMF leadership and were able to conduct some operations and hold territory independently.[86] They were officially kept to the outskirts of the city during the period of field research, but senior officials interviewed said that Nujaifi's forces took part in the liberation of West Mosul informally, and the Ninewa Guards force was later granted an official role in securing Mosul.

Although Shi'a PMF were deliberately kept out of Mosul, there were frequent reports of their presence inside the city. This was in part because they were stationed close by, and it was easy to go in and out of the uncontrolled city, regardless of orders. In an interview for this study, a senior Iraqi military official responsible for operations in Ninewa said that in practice Shi'a *hashd* only followed the orders of their own senior leadership, and frequently disregarded Iraqi government or military orders on where they should or should not go (including in Mosul). In addition, Shi'a PMF fighters often had a de facto presence in areas they were formally excluded from because several Shi'a PMF organizations (e.g. Badr) had a close and long-standing relationship with Federal Police. The same senior military official also commented, "In fact, there is not a big difference between the Federal Police and the PMF because sometimes [when] the PMF are not asked to be part of a battle, they just change their uniform and become a Federal Police."[87]

Southern PMF groups also maintained their influence via local LHSF groups in the Mosul area. Local PMF Shabak militias, which had strong ties to some of the larger Shi'a PMF forces, officially held checkpoints on the outskirts of Mosul and were assigned some limited checkpoint and hold duties in the city at different points in the "holding" operation. There were also reports of these Shabak militias engaging in other operations throughout the Mosul and Ninewa Plains area, including retaliating against Sunni Arab communities. In addition to the Shabak militias, the RISE Foundation also reported that a tribal group recruited from local Sunnis in Mosul, the "Mosul *hashd*," was established by the Badr Organization and the Hezbollah Brigades shortly after ISIL took over in their areas.[88] RISE reported that this group was operating checkpoints in east Mosul and was still under the control of Badr and the Hezbollah Brigades.

The wreckage of burned out cars, likely used as suicide car bombs, litters the damaged streets in Mosul, as seen in February 2017.

Because the city had been so recently liberated at the time of research, the situation was very much in flux. It was hard to distinguish the effects of LHSF actors from those posed by the general lawlessness and gaps in civilian protection and services. For example, in east Mosul, returns were more rapid than in other recently liberated areas, and while there certainly were blockages to return, they were not primarily due to obstruction by LHSF actors. There were also reports of unknown armed actors, some presumed to be PMF groups (local or from other areas of Iraq), engaging in looting, abductions, thefts, and other violence. Some of these events were presumed to be misconduct by official forces or simply the acts of criminals. With so many security actors competing for control and many PMFs not fully following command authorities, officials were concerned that the general environment would make it more challenging to get the situation in Mosul under control.

The liberation was so recent at the time of research that it was still too early to assess the future role of LHSFs in the city and the ways this role would shape political dynamics and local recovery. However, the emergence of multiple, competing groups in and around Mosul, many establishing proxy forces among local actors, was a warning signal for future conflict. Mosul residents interviewed in the course of research – all of whom were Sunni – expressed concern about Shi'a PMF bases near Mosul and about the unofficial activities of PMF in the city. They argued that these PMF were trying to shape the dynamics in Ninewa's most significant city in advance of elections. Other analysts interviewed argued that the ISF's performance in Mosul had restored their damaged reputation and undermined the PMF's position, which would allow local and national Iraqi forces to hold the line on keeping the PMF out of Mosul and limiting their intervention.

Qayyara

Estimated Pre-ISIL Demographics

Population: 120,000
Ethnic composition: Majority Sunni Arab

ISIL Take-Over and Expulsion

Date taken: June 2014
Date reclaimed: August – October 2016
Forces engaged: Iraqi Special Forces (notably Golden Division), the Iraqi Army and Federal Police

Current Situation (as of August 2017)

Overall control: Federal police, supported by some returning local police
LHSFs present: Sunni TMF in a supporting, "hold" role
Key issues:

- Future role of US/Coalition-trained, local Sunni TMF
- Reconciliation and so-called "ISIL families"

Qayyara is a medium-sized sub-district of Mosul that lies 60 kilometers south of the city with a predominantly Sunni Arab population. Qayyara was liberated in August and September 2016 and remained relatively stable afterwards. The Federal Police was in control of holding Qayyara, but locally-recruited, Sunni Arab PMF under the TMF program were active in supporting them.[89]

Given Qayyara's largely Sunni make-up, US-backed tribal forces (predominantly Sunni) – known locally as *al-hashd al-asha'iri*, or tribal *hashd* – played a more significant role in this area than elsewhere in Iraq, although they constituted a very small fraction of the overall forces.[90] For example, according to Coalition tracking reports, approximately one-third of the 16,000 approved and trained tribal forces – that is, roughly 5,000 – were assigned to the Qayyara area at the time of research (from the end of February to March 2017).[91]

Despite the relative significance of the tribal forces in Qayyara, they were still in a subordinate and auxiliary role, largely because of their small numbers. Most tribal leaders were allowed to have 100-300 fighters under their command. An exception was the force fighting under the tribal leader Sheikh Nazam, who was allocated 630 fighters at the time of research, the largest authorized *al-hashd al-asha'iri* group.[92] They acted primarily as auxiliary hold forces drawn from local communities, within which they provided support on minor security tasks. At the time of research, most of the tribal militias were used to man checkpoints running along the main road from Qayyara city to Hamam al-Alil that then goes on toward Mosul. Tribal forces belonging to local tribal leaders also provided basic security and guarded local checkpoints within some sub-districts or smaller communities, including those visited in Hud, Hajj Ali, and Shura. In Shura district, a tribal force belonging to a local *sheikh* shared control with the Federal Police. In this geographically extensive district, which had previously served as a main stronghold for ISIL, security was extremely tight.[93]

As ISIL retreated, it sabotaged 18 of the 50 oil wells as well as other strategic infrastructure in and around Qayyara. Many were still alight nearly 6 months later, with significant health repercussions for returning families.

Although there was no top-level decision to deploy the Shi'a PMF in Qayyara – due to local sensitivities in this largely Sunni community – their close proximity in neighboring districts created opportunities for their participation to bleed over. In particular, as some PMF and notably Badr had a close relationship with the Federal Police, PMF stationed in nearby areas (west of Qayyara, a short drive away) were informally called in when a checkpoint was short on manpower. Some Federal Police reported that when they learned of an alleged ISIL affiliate in Qayyara, they found it easier to alert nearby Shi'a PMF, who controlled areas northwest of the sub-district, to pick the individual up than to obtain formal detention papers. It was not possible to corroborate these accounts with Iraqi officials. However, aid workers and IDPs in Jedda camp also reported instances of the Shi'a PMF entering the camps to detain or recruit individuals. Several *sheikh*s and *mukhtar*s also noted reports of what appeared to be extrajudicial killings or punishments, in which individuals (suspected of ISIL affiliation in most cases) picked up by the PMF forces were found dead the next day.

Most elders and civilians interviewed preferred locally-recruited forces to those coming from outside Qayyara, in part because they had seen the destruction and abuses the Shi'a PMF perpetrated in Sunni areas like Ramadi and Falluja on television: "At least the local [tribal] *hashd* are our sons. We can draw a line with respect to them. We can control them if something happens. But if [the Shi'a] *al-hashd ash-sha'abi* were here, there would be nothing we could do to control them." Nonetheless, although locals preferred forces from their own community to outsiders, the vast majority of civilians saw even the tribal *hashd* as a temporary solution. Ultimately, they preferred security to be provided by state forces, as one local council member and tribal elder described: "It's better to dissolve the tribal *hashd* altogether... even though some are friends and relatives... They are tribal and follow a tribal system. They cannot apply orders. Some of these guys don't even have a kindergarten education."

Qaraqosh (Ninewa Plains)

Estimated Pre-ISIL Demographics

Population: 226,367 (district); 50,000 (Qaraqosh town)
Ethnic composition: Majority Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syriacs (all Christian communities of diverse denominations); significant number of ethnic Shabak (majority Shi'a, minority Sunni), Kurdish and Arab minorities

ISIL Take-Over and Expulsion

Date taken: August 6-7, 2014 (Qaraqosh)
Date reclaimed: End of October 2016
Forces engaged: Iraqi Army (primarily)

Current Situation (as of August 2017)

Overall control: ISF
LHSFs present: NPU (local PMF) in Qaraqosh; Babylon Brigade (local PMF) in Bartella; other local Christian groups (NPF, NGPF) nearby
Key issues:

- Return of population and reconstruction yet to begin
- Competition between KRG and Baghdad, realized via competing local groups

Qaraqosh, Iraq's largest Christian city, is in the southern Ninewa Plains, which lie between Mosul and Erbil. This area is one of the most diverse in Iraq, in terms of both its ethnic and religious make-up and the number of local security forces that proliferated there after ISIL's take-over and expulsion. ISIL forces destroyed the towns of minority communities, including Christian or Chaldo-Assyrian, Sinjari, Shabak, and Assyrian groups, and committed atrocities rising to the level of genocide against these groups.[94] An estimated 125,000 people (predominantly Christian or Chaldo-Assyrian and Shabak) fled from Hamdaniyya, and most of those left behind were brutally executed or enslaved.[95]

After facing this kind of existential threat, many within these minority communities responded by taking up arms. Multiple micro-LHSFs sprang up among different minority factions across the Ninewa Plains in the name of community self-defense. However, these groups were too small and too politically marginalized to stand alone in the hyper-competitive security and political environment. Each allied with larger security actors, including Kurdish forces, the Iraqi government in Baghdad, and southern Shi'a PMF. These alliances put them in the middle of an ongoing Baghdad-KRG competition in the Disputed Territories. There were at least four different Christian or Chaldo-Assyrian groups, ranging from no more than 100 to 2,500 fighters (Plains Guard Forces (NPGF), the Ninewa Plain Forces (NPF), Dwekh Nawsha, and the Ninewa Plains Force (NPU)). Only the last of these forces, the NPU, fell under the PMF and received official TMF training; the rest were supported to varying

degrees by Kurdish forces. A local Shabak force, the 30th Brigade, also fell under the PMF and was in practice directed and controlled by larger Shi'a PMF groups, notably Badr. It is significant because it had much stronger fighting capabilities and controlled important areas in the Ninewa Plains and around Mosul on its own, giving this force a broader sphere of influence and giving operating room to Shi'a PMF in areas they were not officially permitted. One of the units within the PMF's 30th Brigade, known as the Babylon Brigade, became infamous for committing abuses and retaliatory acts across the Ninewa Plains.[96]

The locations of these local forces' deployment depended on the side with which they were affiliated and the KRG-Baghdad agreement on the party in control of a given area. For the most part, as in other contested areas, control followed the rule "You break it, you buy it." The forces that captured an area from ISIL initially would take responsibility for holding it afterwards. Peshmerga forces had cleared the northern Ninewa Plains, north of Mosul, and Peshmerga together with their affiliates (NPGF, NPF, and Dwekh Nawsha) were still responsible for holding these areas at the time of research (the areas around Tal Kayf and Tal as-Soqf). Meanwhile, ISF had taken the lead in the southern Ninewa Plains, and their affiliates were left in charge of holding these areas – Shabak militias controlled checkpoints from Bartella up to the outskirts of Mosul, while the NPU controlled Qaraqosh.[97]

Although by far not the only factors, the forces assigned to a given area and the degree of political support they found there appeared to influence residents' willingness to return, significantly reshaping demographics. During the period of research in February 2017, the areas held by the Christian or Chaldo-Assyrian forces, the majority Christian towns of Qaraqosh and Qaramblis, were ghost towns. In Qaraqosh, there were only the local defense forces stationed at checkpoints (to be discussed shortly) and a handful of residents, who appeared to be there primarily to sell refreshments to the forces stationed in the town.[98] By contrast, in the Shabak militia-controlled areas reconstruction and return of Shabak communities appeared to be much higher. Although Bartella was also severely destroyed and some of its worst-affected neighborhoods still appeared deserted, there were signs of growing returns and of normal life. However, many of the returnees were not the original residents, at least not all of them. While Christians stayed away, Shabak and Arab IDPs (some originally from Bartella but many from other parts of Ninewa) returned *en masse*, reshaping the demographics in the area. One reason for this was that Shabak militias were a more numerous and aggressive force, backed by powerful Shi'a PMF. They gained a reputation for perpetrating abuses in the Ninewa Plains, and, where they did so, Christian militias were not strong enough to stop them (in part because of infighting and divisions among the Christian forces).[99] The threatening presence of Shabak militias was a factor deterring the return of the Christian community to Qaraqosh and nearby Christian areas.[100]

Rabi'a

Estimated Pre-ISIL Demographics

Population: 86,000

Ethnic composition: Majority Sunni Arab, with few Kurdish villages and Sunni Turkmen IDPs

ISIL Take-Over and Expulsion

Date taken: June 2014

Date reclaimed: October – December 2014

Forces engaged: Peshmerga (KDP), Asayish (KDP), Coalition air support, with limited support from local tribal informants & YPJ

Current Situation (as of August 2017)

Overall control: KRG-SF (KDP)

LHSFs present: Jazeera Brigade of the Peshmerga (Sunni Arab tribal force), Rojava Peshmerga, Kurdish Women's Protection Units (YPJ)

Key issues:

- Expansion of KRG authority in "non-disputed" area
- Sunni Arab tribal forces under GOI vs. KRG command
- Presence of Syrian Kurd forces

Rabi'a is a middle-sized, rural, and largely homogenous Sunni Arab sub-district of Tal Afar that runs along the Syrian border in the northwestern corner of Iraq. Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) security forces took the area back from ISIL in August 2014 and retained firm control, making it one of the few expanded areas of Kurdish control outside the Disputed Territories, and in an area without a substantial Kurdish population. The vast majority of the population are Sunni Arab and are dominated by the Shammar tribe. The ISF and its civil administration were in exclusive control of the area until June 2014, but like many areas in Ninewa, with the fall of Mosul, administrative ties to Baghdad and security control also crumpled.

At the time of research, Rabi'a was not just under Kurdish influence but under absolute Kurdish control. Kurdish (specifically, KDP) forces tightly controlled access in and out of the sub-district for returning populations, journalists, and researchers, as well as tightly controlling any other regular commercial or trade activities.[101] Some local tribal communities complained that their main trade routes and economic activities had previously passed through Mosul and that the Kurdish restrictions resulted in greater limitations on their movements and higher prices on goods. Rabi'a was stable and secure after Kurdish resumption of control, and so overall return was high. However, as in Zummar, there were allegations of deliberate destruction of Arab property and other rights violations by KRG Security Forces, particularly in villages suspected of affiliation with ISIL. Four villages northeast of Rabi'a town – Mahmoudiyya, Qahira, Saudiyya, and Sfaya – were largely destroyed, reportedly by Kurdish forces, and their populations were seldom permitted to return, even to other areas of Rabi'a.

Given that this area clearly sat in Baghdad's area of influence, Kurdish efforts to cultivate local ties and expand cooperation with local actors were notable. A unit of the US-supported TMF was briefly established in Rabi'a in March 2016, and trained out of a training center in northern Ninewa.[102] However, the local Rabi'a unit that formed, which calls itself the "Ninewa Lions", later withdrew from the TMF program and joined a new Sunni-Arab tribal unit of the Peshmerga known as the Jazeera Brigade. The leader of the Ninewa Lions, Sheikh Fahd Khalaf Jasim, said in an interview for this study that his primary motivation concerned resources: the TMF program was only willing to formally pay and train a quarter of his mobilized number of forces, he said – only about 600 of the 2,000 forces he commanded – and only provided light weapons.

Established by KDP-Peshmerga, the Jazeera Brigade reported to the Zeravani and received a 40-day training before reporting to duty. It included the Shammari fighters of the Ninewa Lions and fighters from other tribes from Rabi'a, Zummar, and Ayyadhiya sub-districts of Tal Afar, totaling two Sunni Arab battalions of 1,000 fighters each.[103] Unengaged in active combat, the Jazeera Brigade's primary value appeared to be providing local intelligence to Kurdish forces, giving a "local face" to Kurdish control, and potentially being used to counter local forces opposed to the KDP.[104] Although the relationship between Kurdish forces and local Sunni tribal fighters was one of healthy cooperation, it did not appear to be very deep. Local loyalties were still strongly with Baghdad, and many of those interviewed hoped for a resumption of full Baghdad control.

Rabi'a was also home to Syrian fighters, organized under the KDP-affiliate Rojava Peshmerga or the all-female counterpart of the YPG, the Kurdish Women's Protection Units (YPJ), whose snipers oversaw Rabi'a town from a silo on the Syrian border. KRG President Masoud Barzani established the Rojava Peshmerga in February 2012 in an attempt to create a KDP-friendly Kurdish force in Syria. By September 2015, the Rojava Peshmerga's two brigades had 3,000-4,000 fighters, trained by the Peshmerga and, thereafter, Coalition forces.[105] The Rojava reported to the Peshmerga's special forces, the Zeravani.[106] Because the YPG denied the Rojava access to Syria out of fear that their presence would cause a split in Syrian Kurds like the one between the PUK and KDP in Iraq, this Syrian Kurdish force was deployed in Iraq against ISIL as part of the KRG Security Forces. At the time of a visit to Rabi'a in February 2017, the Rojava Peshmerga were manning smaller checkpoints along the main route from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to Sinjar and were later mobilized to Sinjar to engage Yezidi Protection Units affiliated with the YPG.[107]

The Kurdish referendum and Baghdad's military response to it in October 2017 reversed the control patterns documented in this case study. Along with the other Disputed Territories, Rabi'a quickly reverted to full Baghdad control. The research for this study had ended at that point and this case study on Rabi'a was already published on GPPi's website. Nonetheless, later conversations with field researchers and contacts suggested that the local Sunni Arab tribal units that formed the Jazeera Brigade either de facto or informally severed their ties with Peshmerga forces after Iraqi authorities resumed full control in Rabi'a. It is not clear whether they then rejoined the PMF; nor is it clear what happened to the Rojava Peshmerga or other forces who were active during the field research period.

Zummar

Estimated Pre-ISIL Demographics

Population: 168,000

Ethnic composition: Sunni Arab (majority) and Kurdish (minority)

ISIL Take-Over and Expulsion

Date taken: August 2014

Date reclaimed: October – December 2014

Forces engaged: Peshmerga (KDP), Asayish (KDP), Coalition air support, with limited support from local informants and the Rojava Peshmerga

Current Situation (as of August 2017)

Overall control: KRG-SF

LHSFs present: Kurdish tribal force (auxiliary), Jazeera Brigade of the Peshmerga (Sunni Arab tribal force)

Key issues:

- Extended KRG control over a Disputed Territory, with aspirations of long-term control
- Local tribal forces as standalone auxiliary forces vs. integrated in the Peshmerga

Zummar is a rural, mixed-ethnicity, Sunni Arab and Kurdish sub-district that runs along the western shores of the Mosul Dam Lake. It is adjacent to Rabi'a, and many of the security and political dynamics observed there played out in parallel in Zummar. However, unlike its neighbor, Zummar is part of the Disputed Territories and, together with Sinjar, has been considered "the crux of the territorial dispute in Ninewa."[108] In addition, given its position on the border with Duhok in the KRG, Zummar was subject to greater Kurdish influence – though not formal control and administration – prior to 2014. As a result, Kurdish aspirations of long-term control appeared tangibly different in Zummar than in Rabi'a.[109] After the sub-district's liberation in late 2014, the KRG kept a firmer grip on Zummar, which manifested in different levels of political and security control, including different treatment of local defense forces and different return and displacement patterns.

As in Rabi'a, security in Zummar was largely provided by Peshmerga, with support from local Kurdish and Arab tribal forces. At the time of writing, the Asayish provided security inside the subdistrict, while the Peshmerga provided security on its borders. The Peshmerga also recruited some local forces. They formed a roughly 2,000-member defense force from local Kurdish tribes shortly after the liberating the area,[110] and then later formed the local Arab Jazeera Brigade, which is described above in the case study of Rabi'a, from Arab tribal communities in Rabi'a and Zummar. Neither of these local forces appeared to be engaged in significant security tasks. Rather, as noted above, they appeared to have mostly a "local face" and intelligence value.[111]

However, while Kurdish security forces were in control of both Rabi'a and Zummar with local support, Kurdish control was much more apparent and forceful in the latter, both in terms of security as well as interference in and oversight of local administration. While Rabi'a largely resumed prior local administration patterns and maintained administrative ties with Baghdad, in Zummar Kurdish security and political actors had a more direct hand in local administration. Meetings of the heads of local departments were held in the office of the Asayish chief,[112] and a KDP member was appointed mayor of Zummar in 2015,[113] even though the office is supposed to be comprised of elected by members of the local council. A head of one of the Kurdish security forces asserted that people accused of committing crimes must be brought before the Dohuk Criminal Court, implying that Zummar sits under the authority of the KRG, not the Government of Iraq in Ninewa (meanwhile in Rabi'a, administration still cooperated with and maintained links to Baghdad ministries). Control of information and access for researchers were also tighter in Zummar than in Rabi'a, although both required specific access permission. Finally, return and displacement patterns and the treatment of Arab communities differed in Rabi'a and Zummar, with those in the latter more closely resembling the targeted and politically or ethnically motivated policies present in other Disputed Territories, including Kirkuk and the Tuz district of Salah ad-Din (discussed below). In Rabi'a, free return was largely permitted almost immediately after liberation, with only a small percentage of Arab communities, primarily those suspected of ISIL affiliation and inhabitants of the four razed villages, barred from entry.

Remains of Barzan village, a formerly Sunni Arab village destroyed by Kurdish forces, as seen from the main road in February 2017.

While property destruction in Zummar might parallel that in Rabi'a, there were more extensive accusations of politically motivated limitations on Sunni Arab return. A high degree of destruction took place in Sunni Arab areas in Zummar. For example, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch documented that two Arab-majority villages, Barzan and Shikhan (which were seen en route to Zummar in February 2017), were reduced to ashes and rubble and that the houses and shops of Arabs were torched in mixed-community Zummar town and Bardiyya village.[114] Amnesty International alleged that local Kurds and/or Peshmerga torched and blew up the houses of Arabs in revenge for their support for ISIL, citing an admission by two local Kurdish commanders interviewed in a Dutch TV program.[115] Key informants confirmed that Kurdish security forces destroyed Arab property in four towns in Zummar sub-district in retaliation for their alleged support for ISIL (similar to the four villages destroyed in Rabi'a). Kurdish security officials interviewed during the research rejected these claims (as did KRG officials in their response to the findings of the international watchdogs), claiming that the destruction was a result of Coalition air strikes, as well as the extraordinary amount (222 tons) of explosives ISIL left behind in these villages.

As in other areas, levels of return to Arab villages were influenced by and connected to levels of property destruction. A survey by IOM found that 94 percent of returnees claimed their property was damaged;[116] and reports by human rights actors suggest that often property destruction occurred not as a result of military operations but as retaliatory action by local authorities. Beyond the deterrent effect of property destruction, Kurdish forces also limited the return of Arab citizens to Zummar, only allowing return after strong criticism by international observers. In early 2015, Human Rights Watch reported that in the mixed-ethnicity towns Bardiyya, Garbir, and Zummar, displaced Kurds were occupying the homes of Arabs, in the expectation that Arab families would not return.[117] A year on, Amnesty International reported that Arab residents were barred from entry even though displaced Kurds had returned to their homes weeks after ISIL's ouster.[118] The effect of these policies was to tip the balance toward a proportionately larger Kurdish population in Zummar and buttress the KRG's control, which would play into the larger political competition for control of the Disputed Territories.

Consistent with this analysis, there was also evidence that Kurdish forces held onto Zummar more tightly than Rabi'a when Iraqi forces, with Shi'a PMF, moved to resume control of Kurdish-held areas of the Disputed Territories in October 2017. This happened after the primary period of research and publication of this case study; however, other news reports suggested that at least some groups of Peshmerga fighters attempted to hold the line in Zummar, resulting in a level of Peshmerga-ISF shelling and clashes not seen in other parts of the Disputed Territories.[119]

Tal Afar

Estimated Pre-ISIL Demographics

Population: 200,000
Ethnic composition: 90% Turkmen (split Sunni/Shi'a)

ISIL Take-Over and Expulsion

Date taken: June 16, 2014
Date reclaimed: Still under ISIL control
Forces engaged: PMF brigades, Coalition forces

Current Situation (as of August 2017)

Overall control: ISIL control, with PMF on the outskirts
LHSFs present: Badr Organization, AAH, Hezbollah Brigades
Key issues:

- Post-liberation sectarian violence sparked by PMF reprisals
- PMF using Tal Afar as a foothold in Ninewa
- Regional tensions/intervention by Turkey

Tal Afar city, located only 63 kilometers west of Mosul, is the administrative center of Ninewa's Tal Afar district, which also includes Rabi'a and Zummar. Long an al-Qaeda stronghold and the hometown of a substantial number of ISIL fighters and high-level leaders, Tal Afar was one of the last areas to be liberated and was still controlled by ISIL during the period of field research.[120] Tal Afar appeared likely to become a flashpoint for local and regional conflict due to the long-standing Sunni-Shi'a conflict within Tal Afar, threats of retaliation and revenge against the Sunni population by Shi'a PMF, who had established positions on the perimeter of the city, and competing Turkish claims to defend and protect the Sunni Turkmen population.[121]

Tal Afar was predominantly split between Sunni and Shi'a Turkmen communities (though other ethnic and sectarian communities were also present), and sectarian tensions between them, each with ties to larger regional or national powers, frequently fueled conflict in the city and across the local area.[122] Long-standing sectarian tensions drove repressive Shi'a policies under Maliki, which in turn sparked a resurgence of Sunni Islamic extremist activity in the city.[123] When ISIL captured Tal Afar, the fighting was intense and locally divided, with some parts of the Sunni population joining against government forces. The vast majority of the Shi'a population fled.

With other Coalition forces focused on the fight in Mosul, the PMF were the most active anti-ISIL force in the area.[124] Shi'a PMF, including the Badr Organization, AAH, and the Hezbollah Brigades, began gaining territory in Tal Afar's outskirts in October and November 2016, and by March 2017 had secured a base on the main road between Tal Afar and Mosul.[125] At the time of research, the Badr Organization appeared to be in the lead in the fighting, with estimates of the total PMF fighters involved (including from PMF groups other than Badr) ranging from 7,000 to 15,000 militia fighters.[126]

According to the majority of reports, most of the fighters camped around Tal Afar were Shi'a fighters from the south, but with some marginal participation from local fighters from Ninewa and very minor engagement from other LHSF groups. According to an AAH spokesman, 3,000 Shi'a Turkmen who had been forced out of Tal Afar by ISIL in 2014 and joined the PMF were also taking part in the operations.[127] Tracking of tribal units (primarily Sunni) mobilized under the TMF program also suggested that two of these units, with fighters from the Tal Afar area, were holding position on the outskirts of Tal Afar, roughly co-located with Shi'a PMF but not operating under their command.[128] One of these units was a Sunni unit that was officially in the TMF program, receiving Coalition training and support, but had withdrawn, reportedly due to harassment from Shi'a PMF (although it was not possible to confirm this account). The other unit was Shi'a but reportedly chose not to affiliate with or follow the command of larger, southern Shi'a PMF in the area.

At the time of writing, Tal Afar remained a potential flash point for violence and revenge, spurred by the presence of PMFs. Local officials interviewed feared that a strong and continued PMF presence could ratchet up sectarian tensions and cause instability in the immediate district and Ninewa as a whole. As one Sunni tribal leader explained: "The problem is not just that the PMF entered [the area around Tal Afar]. What if they stay, as they have in Salah ad-Din? Really, we are afraid of what will happen if the PMF stay after the elections." At the time of research, KDP forces controlling the territories north of Mosul and Tal Afar also signaled concerns about PMF forces, which included fighters hostile to Kurds, gaining ground close to Kurdish territories.[129] As such, Tal Afar remains an important area to watch, particularly as it relates to sectarian tensions and the inflammatory potential of LHSFs.

Salah ad-Din

Operations to expel ISIL began much earlier in Salah ad-Din than they did in Ninewa, and most of the key population centers were out of ISIL's control by mid-2015. As a result, there were early indications of stability: Salah ad-Din was the first governorate to witness large-scale IDP return after the ousting of ISIL, with 130,000 IDPs returning by July 2015 and 360,000 by December 2016, almost all Sunni Arab.[130] However, there was an inverse trend when it came to security. Salah ad-Din has experienced much higher rates of abduction, killing, forced evictions, unlawful detentions, and property destruction than other governorates, often carried out against families or tribes accused (rightly or wrongly) of affiliation with ISIL. A primary reason for this instability was the dominant role played by PMF in the governorate, and the way that the conduct of both Shi'a PMF from the south and local PMF mobilized by them affected existing political divisions within Salah ad-Din.

Shi'a PMF played a much more significant role in the recapture of areas of Salah ad-Din than they did in Ninewa. Shi'a PMF fighters led or accompanied ISF in the liberation of Tuz, Tikrit, Dour, al-Alam, Baiji, and parts of Shirqat. Moreover, after liberating these areas, PMF remained as a holding force in many areas. Officially the Iraqi government may have been in control, but in practice Shi'a PMF units were better equipped and staffed than central government forces. For example, the PMF controlled the majority of Highway 1 connecting Salah ad-Din to Mosul, Erbil and Baghdad,

maintained bases and detention facilities, and controlled the largest oil refinery in Iraq, located in Baiji.[131] The large number of Shi'a PMF in the governorate and their control of strategic locations allowed them virtually free access in Salah ad-Din, even in areas for which they were not officially responsible. In addition, unlike Ninewa, in Salah ad-Din the Shi'a PMF forces invested heavily in the development of their own auxiliary forces. Shi'a PMF mobilized sizeable local Shi'a Turkmen PMF who controlled half of Tuz. They also established a number of Sunni tribal PMF forces, in Tikrit and surrounding areas, and in Baiji and Shirqat.

ISIL's brutal execution of Shi'a recruits at Camp Speicher (north of Tikrit) inflamed sectarian tensions, and Shi'a PMF were accused of taking out their anger on the Sunni population. There were widespread accusations against Shi'a PMF from the south of committing extrajudicial killings, unlawful detention, property destruction, and other retaliatory acts during operations to recapture or hold Sunni Arab communities in Salah ad-Din. Although such reports decreased over time, there were still significant reports of kidnappings, abuse, and extrajudicial detentions by southern, Shi'a PMF forces, whom both locals and officials said acted as if they were above the law.

While these southern Shi'a PMF took the brunt of the blame publicly, research for these case studies suggested that homegrown PMF forces, both Sunni tribal forces and Shi'a Turkmen forces, were often responsible for as much or more of the violence in Salah ad-Din. Local Sunni tribal forces affiliated with Shi'a PMF in Shirqat, Tikrit, and surrounding areas used their position (and the cover of powerful Shi'a PMF forces) to retaliate against rivals, engaging in property destruction and abuses, including the looting of Tikrit. Some of the most extreme violence took place in Tuz, the only district of Salah ad-Din that is part of the Disputed Territories. At the time of research, the district was divided in a stalemate between KRG and Baghdad-affiliated forces: Kurdish forces held the northern half while local Shi'a Turkmen PMF held the southern half; the capital city of Tuz Khurmatu was under divided control and a flashpoint of frequent standoffs and tit-for-tat retaliation against civilians. Shi'a Turkmen PMF used their position of control in southern Tuz to carry out a campaign of violence and intimidation against non-Shi'a Turkmen groups in their area that raised allegations of ethnic cleansing. To a lesser but still significant degree, Kurdish forces in the northern half of Tuz also targeted Sunni Arab communities in their area of control, razing villages, destroying homes, and blocking Sunni Arab return.

Tikrit and Surrounding Areas (Dour and al-Alam)

Estimated Pre-ISIL Demographics

Population: 200,000
Ethnic composition: 90% Sunni Muslim

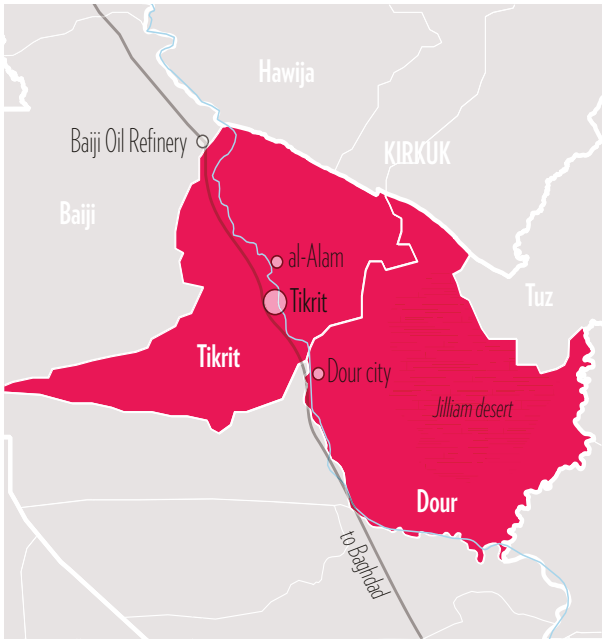
ISIL Take-Over and Expulsion

Date taken: June 11, 2014
Date reclaimed: March 14, 2015 (al-Alam, Dour); April 17, 2015 (Tikrit)
Forces engaged: Iraqi Security Forces, Federal Police, supported by Shi'a PMF (Badr, Hezbollah Brigades, Imam Ali brigades, AAH)

Current Situation (as of August 2017)

Overall control: Officially under Iraqi government control, but significant Shi'a PMF activity
LHSFs present: Badr, AAH, and Hezbollah; range of Sunni tribal PMF
Key issues:

- Shi'a PMF competition for control, incl. unchecked abuses
- Acts of revenge and retaliation escalating local conflicts
- Reconstruction after initial destruction and looting



Although Tikrit and the nearby areas of Dour and al-Alam (also covered in this summary) were liberated early, and there were significant returns, the situation remained highly unstable at the time of research. The nearby frontline with ISIL stretching across Dour was a source of insecurity, but the role and conduct of PMF forces in the area was equally destabilizing. Southern Shi'a PMF forces were not formally in control, but they had played an important role in the liberation of Tikrit, Dour, al-Alam and surrounding areas, and had maintained a presence and controlling influence after liberation.

Given that the capital of Salah ad-Din governorate and birthplace of Saddam Hussein, Tikrit[132] has long been an important Sunni Arab power center, the presence – and more importantly, the dominance – of Shi'a PMF in Tikrit was thus controversial from the beginning. It was made worse by significant levels of Shi'a PMF abuse during the liberation campaign, which left a deep sectarian scar.[133] Shi'a PMF also mobilized or oversaw local tribal affiliates of the PMF in Salah ad-Din, which contributed to instability in two ways: first, these local groups engaged in significant abuses, property destruction, and revenge attacks in their own right, adding to the cacophony of armed groups and extrajudicial violence in the governorate; second, the alliance between Shi'a PMF and local Sunni tribal groups played into and upset local political and tribal rivalries, exacerbating political instability in the governorate.

At the time of research, Shi'a PMF had no official role in holding Tikrit and the surrounding areas. Local authorities and Federal Police were nominally in charge of security. However, Shi'a PMF forces were in control of ongoing campaigns (as in the frontline in Dour) and significant strategic areas (such as Highway 1) nearby, and had

unfettered access throughout the Tikrit area. In practice, they rivaled official Iraqi forces and some interviewees argued that they were "the true power holders" in the governorate.[134] They also had significant opportunities to influence the situation via local partners. At the time of research and initial publication of this case study (in August 2016),[135] there were there were at least six different Sunni tribal PMF drawn from tribes in al-Alam and Dour, and new ones were emerging as of late summer 2017. Each of the tribal forces was affiliated with one of the larger Shi'a PMF groups. For example, there was one force in al-Alam known to be affiliated with AAH and another that worked closely with Badr. In Dour, there were also affiliates of Badr, AAH, and a new group designated to work with the Khorasani Brigades.[136] There were also Sunni tribal PMF affiliates from other districts, notably Shirqat and Baiji, which retained a presence in Tikrit city and were reported to have even closer links with the larger Shi'a PMF groups.

Mobilization and recruitment patterns, and the level of Shi'a PMF command and control, varied for each unit. In some locations, Shi'a PMF directly recruited local Sunni tribal forces to help them clear and hold the area. In others, Sunni tribal leaders reached out to Shi'a PMF and asked to form a unit. Unlike in Ninewa, where the US sponsored a specific tribal mobilization effort, the TMF, in Salah ad-Din, the only way for Sunni tribal leaders to join the fight against ISIL was to join the regular PMF umbrella. Sunni tribal leaders wishing to register and receive salary and official designation for their forces would lodge their requests via one of these larger Shi'a PMF, which played a leadership role in the PMF. Once the tribal PMF was registered, the larger Shi'a PMF group also continued to administer their salaries and provide any additional training and support.

This administrative control provided the Shi'a PMF with varying degrees of influence over the local tribal PMF group, depending on the strength of Shi'a PMF presence in the area and the nature of their relationship with the tribal group. In areas of Salah ad-Din where Shi'a PMF were still playing an active role, they tended to use these Sunni tribal PMF as auxiliary forces and directing their activities. For example, one of the tribal PMFs in Dour, a group known as the Shammari Brigade, supported the 9th Brigade of Badr in holding the frontline along the Jilliam Desert. In areas where Shi'a PMF activity waned and Iraqi authorities began to take a more active role, the Sunni tribal PMF would more often take orders from and work with Iraqi authorities. For example, at the time of research AAH activities and influence in al-Alam had declined, so the AAH affiliate in al-Alam had begun was working predominantly with local police and ISF, mostly holding checkpoints.

Given the predominant role played by PMF, both local and outside PMF, in Salah ad-Din, Tikrit was one of the areas where researchers observed more significant consequences of LHSFs. First, PMF forces' conduct (whether sanctioned by their leadership or not) had significant repercussions for civilian protection and respect for human rights, and indirectly impeded the re-establishment of security and rule of law. Shi'a PMF forces were alleged to have engaged in widespread property destruction, mass detentions, extrajudicial killings, and other retaliatory acts against the Sunni population during the campaign to retake Tikrit, Dour, and al-Alam. Although the most extreme examples of mass detention and property destruction had ebbed at the time of research, there were still reports of extrajudicial detentions and kidnappings, and PMF forces harassing or intimidating people, or blocking returns.[137] Sunni tribal PMF

also engaged in extrajudicial killing, violence, and harassment, and blocked returns. These acts were often motivated by the desire to take revenge against those they blamed for ISIL's rise. For example, the extensive looting, destruction, and violence during the liberation of Tikrit was extremely controversial and was publicly blamed on southern Shi'a PMF.[138] However, locals said Yassin al-J'bouri's Sunni tribal PMF – which originate from Shirqat district and are discussed in the Shirqat case study – were primarily responsible for the looting, using the cover of their Shi'a PMF allies to settle their own scores.

Such extrajudicial violence and abuse, by those vested with some level of governing authority, also had serious repercussions for overall stability and the rule of law. The overall number of armed groups in Tikrit, with unclear or competing lines of control, made it more difficult to control security and limit criminality. The fact that many of these groups held themselves above the law made it even more difficult. Interviewees, including governorate officials, said that the Shi'a PMF followed their own rules and did not defer to local authorities. Local authorities cited examples of Shi'a PMF directly challenging ISF and local authorities who tried to rein them in, which sometimes led to open clashes and violence between PMF and ISF. As one provincial council member noted: "The Iraqi police are available [and] try to apply the rule of law, but...the existence of different types of forces and sometimes clashes with [these forces] weakens their performance."

The often politically or tribally motivated violence also had significant political repercussions. Locals and analysts said that J'Bouri's Sunni PMF continued to engage in extrajudicial violence and destruction, beyond the initial looting of Tikrit, and that such violence was linked to his political ambitions. He was viewed as the main rival to the Governor of Salah ad-Din, Ahmed Abdullah al-J'bouri, and local analysts said he used his tribal PMF and position with Shi'a PMF to provoke instability and undermine governorate control, which would affect upcoming elections.

PMF dynamics also influenced the willingness of some IDPs to return. In IOM's survey of IDP families from Tikrit city center who had not returned, 11 percent mentioned fear of security actors as the main reason they had not returned, while 26 percent mentioned fear of reprisals or acts of violence.[139] Some of these reprisals might come from the population but those conducting the research suggested that the fear had a very strong linkage with the LHSF activities in the governorate. Seventy-six percent of these IDPs also reported that they were "very dissatisfied" with the role of "militias" in Tikrit.[140]

Shirqat

Estimated Pre-ISIL Demographics

Population: 210,000
Ethnic composition: Sunni Arabs

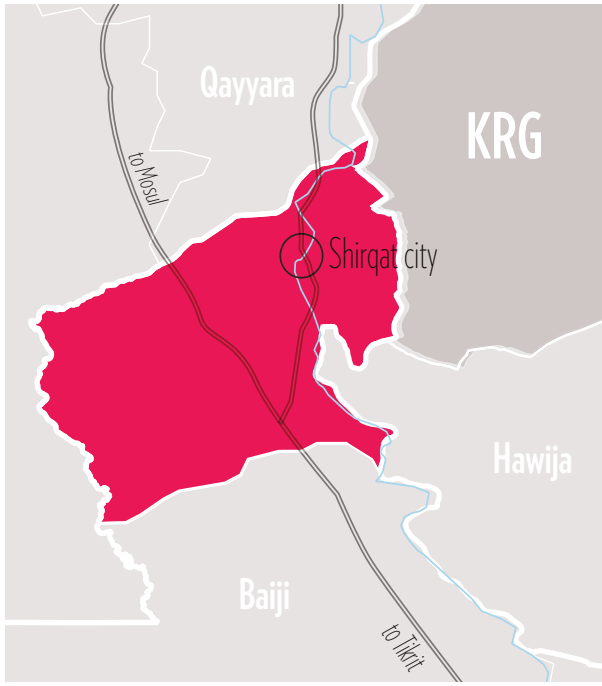
ISIL Take-Over and Expulsion

Date taken: June 10-11, 2014
Date reclaimed: September 2016 (west bank); September-October 2017 (east bank)
Forces engaged: ISF, local police, local Sunni PMF

Current Situation (as of August 2017)

Overall control: Shirqat city split between ISIL (east bank) and ISF/Sunni PMF; Shi'a PMF control Highway 1
LHSFs present: AAH, Badr Organization, Sunni tribal PMF (under Shi'a PMF control)
Key issues:

- Strong presence of local Sunni tribal forces (under PMF) with allegations of abuse, including abductions, theft, and trafficking
- ISIL presence in the eastern district
- Forced displacement of ISIL families



Shirqat is a Sunni Arab district in northern Salah ad-Din, located along Highway 1.[141] Although an important transit point, Shirqat itself is a small and underpopulated district. It was not a priority for Iraqi forces, and as a result, the PMF – both southern Shi'a forces and local Sunni tribal ones – played a much larger role.

At the time of research, ISF together with local Sunni tribal PMF fought to retake the remaining pockets of ISIL control, the eastern half of Shirqat city to Hawija. Shi'a PMF controlled the main Highway 1 route[142] and surrounding areas in the western half of the governorate. While Iraqi forces were officially in charge, Shi'a PMF's strategic position on the most important transit route, and their control of the checkpoints in and out of Shirqat city, gave them free access to conduct activities and exert significant influence on the governorate as a whole. There was also a relatively slim number of ISF in Shirqat, and those who were present were focused on the ongoing operations against ISIL. Thus, Shi'a PMF had virtually unchecked autonomy. They routinely conducted "inspection tours" during which they would detain individuals suspected of ISIL affiliation, often in very vague circumstances. Although this generally resulted in extremely limited access to the governorate, blocking trade, aid, and IDP flows (not to mention information about the governorate), some humanitarians interviewed noted that Shi'a PMF took responsibility for the areas they were in and enabled them to provide humanitarian aid.

In Shirqat city and other smaller villages, Sunni tribal PMF, supported by the Shi'a PMF, exhibited strong influence. The largest one in Shirqat was the 51st Brigade,

also known as the *Liwa Salah ad-Din*. It drew predominantly from local tribes and, to a lesser extent, tribes from the nearby Baiji district (mostly the J'bouri tribe in both areas) and operated not only in Shirqat, but also in Baiji, Tikrit, and other areas of Salah ad-Din. The 51st Brigade fell under the command of Yassin al-J'bouri, the rival of the Governor of Salah ad-Din, discussed above.[143] It had strong links to the dominant Shi'a PMF groups in Salah ad-Din. Affiliation with a larger Shi'a PMF was both an asset and a burden. Being backed by these stronger forces protected the 51st Brigade when it engaged in illegal activities. For example, there were significant allegations of misconduct against the 51st Brigade, including looting (notably in Tikrit), robbery, abductions, and revenge killings, as well as smuggling goods to ISIL fighters.[144] On the other hand, this affiliation also meant that the brigade sometimes acted at the behest of the Shi'a PMF. For example, local officials in Shirqat said the 51st Brigade periodically conducted inspection tours and house searches on behalf of the Shi'a PMF.

While Yassin al-J'bouri's 51st Brigade was the most active (and notorious) force in and around Shirqat, other tribal forces were also present, including members of the Knights of Jibbour, and at least one former TMF unit from Ninewa. It had been expelled from the TMF program due to allegations of torture, but kept fighting alongside Iraqi forces, including clearing villages and identifying airstrike targets.

A final important issue in Shirqat was the role of PMF in forced displacement and blocked IDP return. Shirqat was viewed as one of ISIL's strongholds, with a fair amount of popular support. Because of this general suspicion of Shirqat residents (merited or not), and the ongoing ISIL threat in the governorate, in early 2017, an estimated 110 to 125 "ISIL families" were deported to IDP camps in the Shahama IDP camp, north of Tikrit.[145] Although the families were housed in an IDP camp, Human Rights Watch described their conditions as closer to detention and reported that these "ISIL families" were being kept separate from the rest of the camp and were not allowed to leave or have access to mobile phones.[146] Moreover, there was no due process for families accused of ISIL affiliation, no right of appeal, and a lack of transparency regarding how families were identified. Local sources, as well as rights groups and humanitarian organizations, suggested that the forced displacement followed a decision by the Salah ad-Din Provincial Council around August 2016.[147] Although the decree was later found to be unlawful by the Iraqi Supreme Court, it was still de facto enforced at the time of research, and orders were given to all checkpoints to prevent any suspected ISIL family member from entering Shirqat.[148]

More broadly, PMF manning checkpoints also helped prevent the return of other residents due to suspected ISIL involvement, although often in concert with local authorities. A full discussion of issues with blocked return and so-called "vetting" of returnees (wherein IDPs went through a process of obtaining a security clearance from authorities before being permitted to return to their homes) is beyond the scope of this report, and is well detailed elsewhere. The processes for permitting return were widely critiqued as being ambiguous, irregular, and lacking a strong evidentiary basis, and so these critiques go beyond the PMF engagement in applying vetting. However, given this study's focus on how LHSFs influenced local dynamics in the case study areas, it is worth registering how individual PMF units could significantly determine local return flows through their control of checkpoints in Shirqat. This happened throughout the governorate, but checkpoints in Shirqat, at the border of three governorates and between KRG and Iraq territory, were an important chokepoint and it is notable that

this critical chokepoint was mostly in the control of PMF units. This gave PMF in Shirqat significant control of how vetting, access, and return policies were applied in the governorate, but also influenced return to other parts of Salah ad-Din. In addition, although the process by which an individual was put on the list to be blocked from re-entry was unclear, local interviews suggested that reports from Shi'a PMF or local PMF like the 51st Brigade could place someone on that list, giving them additional leverage to restrict returns.

Baiji

Estimated Pre-ISIL Demographics

Population: 205,000
Ethnic composition: Majority Sunni Arab

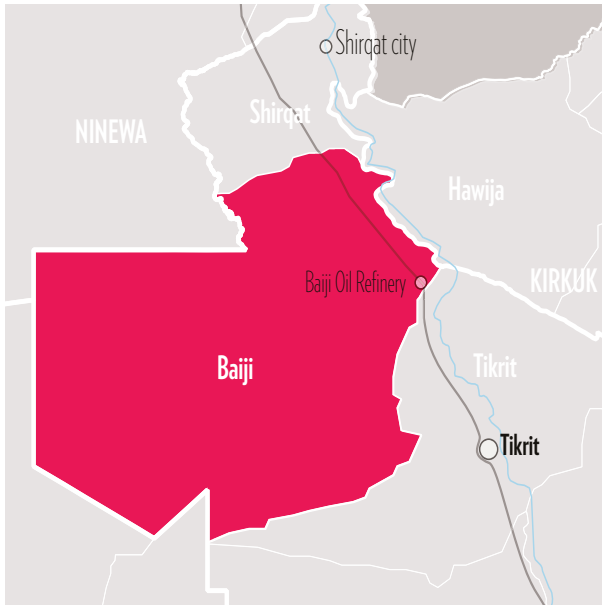
ISIL Take-Over and Expulsion

Date taken: June 11, 2014
Date reclaimed: October 22, 2015
Forces engaged: PMF, Counter-Terrorism Service, Federal Police, US-led Coalition airstrikes, Liwa Salah ad-Din, local police

Current Situation (as of August 2017)

Overall control: PMF is the primary security actor in most of the district; ISIL still has pockets of control
LHSFs present: Shi'a PMF (esp. AAH, Ali al-Akbar Brigade, Hezbollah Brigades); Sunni Arab PMF
Key issues:

- Infrastructure damage and control of the oil refinery
- Ongoing ISIL presence and attacks
- Slow return of IDPs due to insecurity and PMF directives



Baiji, northwest of Tikrit, is predominantly known for being the site of Iraq's biggest oil refinery. Prior to 2014, it supplied more than a third of Iraq's domestic energy needs (petrol, diesel, heating oil, motor oil, etc.), worth between 5.5 and 6.5 million US dollar per month.[149] After the expulsion of ISIL, PMF took control of much of the district's security. While the Iraqi Army's Salah ad-Din Operations Command was formally in charge of security in Baiji district, all stakeholders interviewed agreed that Shi'a PMF and their local Sunni proxies held the true power in Baiji. For example, the AAH maintained control of the area around the refinery, potentially with some local support.[150]

In addition to the main Shi'a PMF groups, a number of smaller local forces worked in conjunction with them. Local police forces and the PMF's al-Taff Brigade, a splinter group from the Abbas Combat Division that includes local Sunni Arabs, were the primary security actors south of Baiji city, in the Hujjaj and Albu Tu'ma villages.[151] Inside Baiji city and to its north, in Makhoul sub-district, the al-Sadr Martyr Brigade (approximately 400 fighters) and the Supreme Reference Supporters Brigade

(approximately 300 fighters) were the primary security actors. Meanwhile, the Sunni Arab PMF unit known as the 51st Brigade, or locally as *Liwa Salah ad-Din* (discussed in the Shirqat case study), operated either jointly with Shi'a PMF or autonomously in the rural areas north of Baiji city.[152] There were also reports of AAH and other Shi'a PMF standing up small auxiliary PMF to help them hold areas like the Baiji refinery, but these local auxiliary forces were so small, and the names and force affiliations fluctuated so much, that it was difficult to identify them.

Prolonged clashes between ISIL and pro-government forces, as well as looting by the PMF, decimated an estimated 80 percent of the district's infrastructure.[153] The most severe damage was to the Baiji refinery itself, much of which took place during looting by PMF after the military operation. According to a representative from a local security force and a refinery official, the PMF stole equipment from the refinery that it later sold for profit. According to local sources, PMF looting extended to the fertilizer plant, the power plant, the railroad station, water purification stations, and most of the private and public property in Baiji. Most sources seemed to suggest that the Hezbollah Brigades were centrally involved in the early fighting and the looting of the facility, and AAH in later periods.

As in Shirqat, issues with displacement and blocked return were also a significant problem in Baiji. At the time of research, IOM's displacement tracking matrix estimated the rate of IDP return at only 15 percent of the district's pre-2014 population.[154] The biggest obstacles to return were the almost total infrastructure destruction within the district and the presence of Shi'a PMF units, whose past abuses and continued hold on the area deterred families from returning despite official encouragement and unofficial pressure from governorate officials. There were significant allegations of PMF units mistreating members of the Sunni Arab population, including mass detentions.[155] In addition, as IDPs transited through or tried to return to Baiji, they were subject to harsh interrogation and treatment at checkpoints, and often blocked from returning.[156]

Tuz

Estimated Pre-ISIL Demographics

Population: 180,000 – 200,000

Ethnic composition: Split almost evenly among Sunni Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen (Shi'a and Sunni)

ISIL Take-Over and Expulsion

Date taken: June 11-12, 2014 (except Amerli)

Date reclaimed: August - October 2014

Forces engaged: PMF, Peshmerga, Coalition and Iraqi air support, volunteers

Current Situation (as of August 2017)

Overall control: Split control between Peshmerga and PMF

LHSFs present: PUK Peshmerga; local Turkmen PMF (affiliates of Badr, Peace Brigades, Hezbollah Brigades and AAH); Khorasani Brigades and Imam Ali Combat Division also present

Key issues:

- Divided Kurdish and Turkish control, periodic conflict, unresolved through mediation
- Continued ISIL threat
- No return of Arabs and rights violations in PMF-controlled areas

Saddam Hussein carved Tuz district off from the oil-rich Kirkuk governorate in 1976 to undercut Kurdish aspirations for autonomy. Since then, it has been formally part of Salah ad-Din governorate; however, due to its location on the border of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and its multi-ethnic make-up (it is split almost evenly among Turkmens, Kurds, and Sunni Arabs), the political dynamics in Tuz are more similar to those in the neighboring Kirkuk governorate than the rest of the Salah ad-Din governorate. It is the only part of Salah ad-Din considered to be part of the Disputed Territories, and the post-ISIL dynamics strongly mirrored Kurdish forces' conduct in other Disputed Territories.

During the period of research, Tuz was at the center of an active contest for power between different LHSF groups.[157] The central government was virtually absent from the district from June 2014 until May 2017, and then only in one of the three sub-districts, Amerli. Since the ouster of ISIL at the end of 2014, Tuz was split between PMF and Peshmerga control. Although there was some fluctuation in the lines of control, PUK-affiliated Kurdish Security Forces were dominant in the northern parts of the central subdistrict, while a range of PMF forces controlled the rest of the district. The district capital of Tuz Khurmatu was divided between PMF and Kurdish forces, and a frequent site for clashes and retaliatory acts between both sides.[158] This prompted the intervention of the top Shi'a cleric in Iraq, Ali al-Sistani, who negotiated a cease-fire among different sides in March 2016 (which later failed). Interestingly, the PMF forces closest to Sistani's office, the Imam Ali Combat division, were called in to help enforce

the peace agreement. The lines of control are important to understand in Tuz because different LHSF factions' efforts to control particular areas and protect the constituents affiliated with them had a direct effect on the safety and return of competing ethnic or sectarian groups. Shi'a PMF forces (primarily Badr, but also Peace Brigades, Hezbollah Brigades, AAH, and others) led operations to expel ISIL forces from the southern half of Tuz, in Amerli and Suleiman Bek sub-districts. But based on a pact between the KRG and Baghdad, southern PMF fighters were required to withdraw after the district was liberated, and nearly all southern PMF fighters left Tuz in December 2014 (with the exception of the Khorasani Brigades).[159] However, they kept a foothold in the Amerli and Suleiman Bek sub-districts by mobilizing local affiliated groups from the local Shi'a Turkmen PMF population in areas they liberated.[160]

Each of the local units flew the flag and followed the command of the specific PMF force that mobilized them, typically the group that had first liberated that area (for example, Badr in Suleiman Bek sub-district; Hezbollah Brigades and Badr together in Amerli). Generally, the Shi'a Turkmen PMF units were strong enough to hold the territory on their own and ran their own day-to-day operations, but members of the Shi'a Turkmen PMF interviewed said they would consult with and take the advice of the Shi'a PMF leadership whom they reported to.

Once in control, these Shi'a Turkmen PMF groups perpetrated numerous abuses and retaliatory acts, engaged in large-scale property destruction, and restricted the return of non-Shi'a Turkmen groups. Shi'a Turkmen PMF abuses (from petty harassment to mass arrests and targeted killings of leaders) led to the emptying of Sunni Turkmen and Sunni Arab populations in formerly mixed neighborhoods of Tuz Khurmatu city. Locals from these neighborhoods estimated that at the time of research only 5-10 percent of the original Sunni Arab population and 10 percent of the Sunni Turkmen population remained.[161] Reports of Shi'a Turkmen attacks on Sunni Arab and Sunni Turkmen communities were fewer in areas outside of Tuz Khurmatu because there were few non-Shi'a Turkmen left. While nearly all families from Amerli's three Turkmen Shi'a villages returned to their homes shortly after ISIL's ouster, no Arabs or Sunni Turkmen (an estimated 15,000 families or more) had returned to areas controlled by the PMF. However, in their absence, Shi'a Turkmen PMF engaged in significant destruction of homes and property in non-Shi'a Turkmen communities. The patterns of property destruction suggested an effort to permanently change population dynamics, according to some human rights groups and local informants.[162] Locals interviewed tended to agree with Human Rights Watch's findings and argued that the property destruction in PMF-controlled Tuz was similar to the patterns of sectarian appropriation in liberated areas that have been reported in other parts of Iraq (notably in Jurf al-Sahkr in Babel governorate).[163]

As noted, Kurdish forces, predominantly the PUK, controlled the northern half of Tuz.[164] There was not the same record of abuse in Kurdish-controlled areas, and most residents interviewed, who were from a range of constituencies, viewed Kurdish protection positively. However, there did appear to be similar patterns of deliberate property destruction and blocked return – actions that might alter the demographic make-up and shift future control. Many Arab villages in Tuz's central sub-district were allegedly razed during or after ISIL's ouster, while others close to Sadiq Airbase – Hulaywa 1, Hulaywa 2, and Khashamina – were declared part of a newly designated "militarized zone," rendering return impossible. Kurdish forces denied permission

for residents of three Kurdish-controlled Arab villages in Suleiman Bek sub-district to return.[165] This type of deliberate property destruction and limits on Arab returns mirrored similar patterns in other parts of the Disputed Territories under Kurdish control (post-ISIL), including in Ninewa's Zummar sub-district and Kirkuk.

Given these dynamics, it is perhaps not surprising that the Iraqi response to the September Kurdish referendum would kickstart more conflict in Tuz. Although after the initial publication of this case study and beyond the scope of research, other news outlets and human rights organizations documented that the resumption of Iraqi control over Kurdish-held areas of the Disputed Territories in October 2017 provoked clashes and mass displacement in Tuz. Amnesty International reported that during the takeover of divided Tuz Khurmatu city, predominantly Kurdish areas were subject to indiscriminate attacks and looting, with homes set on fire and destroyed.[166] Amnesty also reported clashes between Kurdish Peshmerga forces and Shi'a PMF, and cited a United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) statistic that nearly 35,000 civilians had fled Tuz since October 16, 2017.[167] At the time of this study's publication, the situation in Tuz was still reported to be volatile.

Kirkuk

Estimated Pre-ISIL Demographics

Population: 1 million

Ethnic composition: Kurdish and Arab majority, sizeable Turkmen population

ISIL Take-Over and Expulsion

Date taken: June 2014

Date reclaimed: October 2017 for Hawija and surrounding areas; August 2014 for rest

Forces engaged: PUK-Peshmerga, Turkmen PMF, Shi'a Arab PMF (Abbas Combat Division, Imam Ali Brigades, Karrar's Sons Brigade), Kurdistan Freedom Falcons, local police

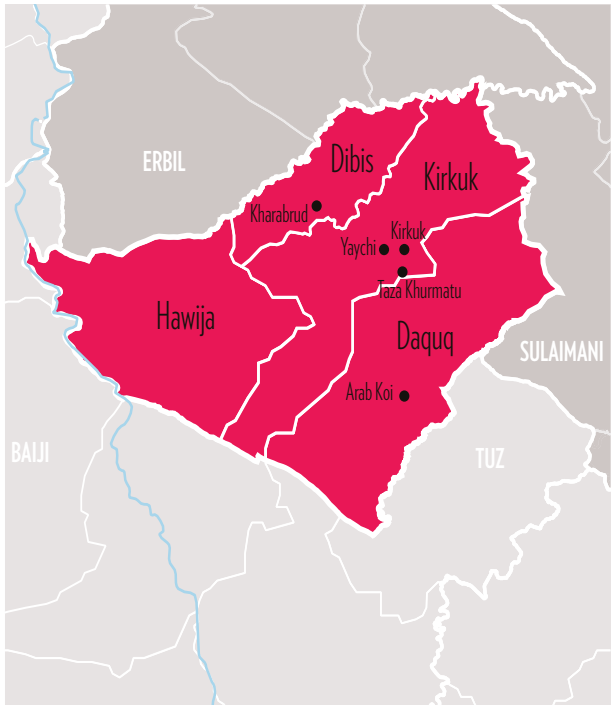
Current Situation (as of August 2017)

Overall control: PUK-Peshmerga

LHSFs present: PMF Turkmen Brigades 16 & 52 (Badr), Abbas Combat Division

Key issues:

- Continued ISIL presence in Hawija
- PMF and Peshmerga forces limiting Arab Sunnis resettlement and IDP presence
- PMF and Peshmerga role and area of control after the defeat of ISIL a potential clash point



In many ways, the dynamics in Kirkuk mirrored those in adjacent Tuz district of Salah ad-Din, with divided control between Kurdish forces and PMF (mostly via local auxiliaries), and property destruction and forced displacement changing demographics in both forces' respective areas of control. Because the interplay between these different forces and zones of control is important, information from the different research sites has been combined into one governorate-wide summary, rather than divided into individual district or subdistrict summaries.[168]

The response to the ISIL threat dramatically changed the security dynamics in Kirkuk governorate and created new patterns of control in this most coveted part of the Disputed Territories. Peshmerga forces controlled only a small part of Kirkuk governorate prior to 2014.[169] But as ISIL advanced into Kirkuk in the summer of 2014, Kurdish forces entered Kirkuk to halt the ISIL line of advance and then assumed responsibility for a significant portion of the governorate, including Dibis district, parts of Daquq district, the region's capital, Kirkuk city, and major oil assets.[170] While they held their line, Kurdish forces were not able to retake the predominantly Sunni Arab areas taken by ISIL in 2014. At the time of writing, ISIL forces continued to control or have operating space in most of the southern half of Kirkuk, centered in Hawija district.

In order to confront continued security threats and attacks from ISIL held areas, Kurds and PMF (predominantly the Badr Organization) agreed to join forces to challenge ISIL in a February 2015 agreement. This agreement, which was still in effect

at the time of research, carved out Kurdish and PMF areas of control and responsibility. PMF were based out of the non-Kurdish areas of Taza Khurmatu and also challenged ISIL frontlines (and prepared for the fight in Hawija) out of a smaller base in the Hamreen mountains on the border with Salah ad-Din.[171] KRG forces still operated in some of these areas and did fight joint operations with PMF in some cases, notably in operations to retake Bashir.[172] KRG Security Forces retained exclusive control (without PMF interference) in all other parts of the governorate, which was effectively the northern half of the governorate.[173] ISF were not present.

Within both Kurdish and PMF zones of control or responsibility, there were a number of subgroups and competing allegiances. Within the Kurdish area of control generally, PUK forces controlled more of the territory, including Kirkuk city and most of the surrounding areas.[174] KDP forces (and their affiliates) controlled only parts of Dibis district. However, KDP forces seized control of the most significant oil resources, including the Avana dome and the Bai Hassan fields, and benefited from a greater share of the proceeds, a point of tension that occasionally flared into direct confrontations during 2017.[175] A plethora of micro-groups drawing from the full range of Kirkuk's diverse ethnic and sectarian groups mobilized themselves against ISIL, including a mixed Kurdish-Turkmen tribal force in Yaychi, outside Kirkuk, a group of Kakai fighters in Daquq, and a group of mixed Sunni Kurdish, Arab, and Turkmen fighters near Bashir (called the "Free Iraq Division").[176] Kurdish forces brokered affiliations or partnerships with these forces, seemingly as a way to increase local support and extend their influence vis-à-vis other actors. Both KDP and PUK sometimes competed with each other for the support of some local groups (as with the Kakai fighters in Daquq), and PUK forces reportedly backed the Free Iraq Division near Bashir as a way to balance against the predominant PMF influence in the area. However, while Kurdish forces sought to broker local alliances, it was not a deep cooperation. There were no examples of extensive cooperation or joint security responsibilities between the Peshmerga and these groups, and only the Kakai force was formally recognized by the Ministry of Peshmerga. Instead, Kurdish forces devoted more attention to partnering and strengthening their influence with local police, which were still the dominant authority in places like Kirkuk city.

PMF forces mobilized and relied on local fighters to a much greater degree, with local PMF forces comprising the majority of the estimated 7,000 PMF fighters in Kirkuk in June 2017, according to a Kirkuk security official interviewed. Like PMF local mobilization in Tuz district of Salah ad-Din, which borders Kirkuk, Shi'a PMF groups from the south primarily tapped sectarian allegiances to mobilize Shi'a Turkmen communities in Kirkuk into local PMF franchise groups. Beginning in March 2015, Turkmen forces began to be established and trained at the main PMF base in Taza Khurmatu, with some training provided directly by Iranian and Lebanese Hezbollah instructors.[177] The largest number of Turkmen forces were mobilized into two Brigades, 16 and 52, both organized and reporting through the Badr Organization. Brigades 16 and 52 operated across the belt of territory from Taza Khurmatu to the southernmost village in Tuz district (in Salah ad-Din). Local security officials and forces interviewed estimated that Brigade 16 alone had six regiments, each comprising 150-300 Shi'a Turkmen forces. Two further Turkmen PMF regiments operated in Taza Khurmatu, in coordination with the PMF operations but independent from Badr.[178] The mobilization of these brigades was significant, because while each unit or brigade was

organized by and reported through the larger Shi'a PMF command structure, on a daily basis they acted as semi-autonomous forces and held areas on their own. In addition to the Turkmen forces, two Sunni Arab forces in Kirkuk were mobilized under the PMF structure (primarily organized under and working with Badr).[179]

Competition between different sectarian and ethnic groups in Kirkuk materialized not only in terms of coopting forces but also in terms of their treatment of local populations and IDPs in Kirkuk. Turkmen PMF harassed, abused, and destroyed the property of Arab residents in their areas of operations, with the result non-Shi'a Turkmen groups fled or were forcibly excluded in PMF zones of control. For example, Bashir had traditionally been a Shi'a Turkmen village surrounded by predominantly Sunni Arab villages. By the time of writing, the area was only Shi'a Turkmen. Although overall return was relatively low due to ongoing ISIL threats and property destruction, one-third of the Shi'a Turkmen families who had been displaced had returned, compared to the total lack of Arab returns.[180] A local official said that Turkmen PMF at checkpoints actively blocked Arab IDPs from returning, but notably in coordination with Peshmerga and the local police.

Kurdish forces excluded Sunni Arab residents in their much larger areas of operation to an even greater degree. In response to actual or anticipated attacks on Kurdish forces, which Kurdish officials blamed on sleeper cells within IDP communities, Kurdish officials razed and emptied some Arab villages and informal settlements in and around Kirkuk city.[181] Most significantly, Human Rights Watch uncovered evidence that Kurdish Security Forces were responsible for the partial or complete destruction of 60 Sunni Arab villages in 2016.[182] Return to these villages was restricted, and many residents remained in IDP camps by late 2017 (the time of writing).[183] Kurdish forces also expelled Sunni Arab and Sunni Turkmen who originated from other governorates but were displaced to Kirkuk. 12,000 people were expelled in September 2016 alone.[184]

Although the destruction of homes and evictions of the Arab population in Kirkuk governorate were justified on the grounds of military necessity or described as retaliations for ISIL attacks – both by Kurdish and Turkmen forces – they had the effect of changing demographics on the ground in favor of the forces in control of that area.[185] On the Shi'a Turkmen side, they mirrored strategies in other Shi'a Turkmen areas like Tuz to create all Shi'a Turkmen territories. In the Kurdish areas, restrictions on the rights of Arabs effectively reversed the effects of the Baath's "Arabization" policies. In response to concerns raised about restrictions on Sunni Arabs' return to destroyed villages, KRG President Masoud Barzani told Human Rights Watch in July 2016 that the KRG would not allow Sunni Arabs to return to villages that had been "Arabized" by former President Saddam Hussein.[186] Kurdish political actors were very open about the fact that the ISIL invasion of 2014 and the collapse of Iraqi forces presented the KRG with the prospect of achieving their long-held political goal of making Kirkuk an official Kurdish territory. As such, the Sunni Arab property destruction and forced displacement might be understood as the latest tit-for-tat in the forced demographic changes that have characterized Kirkuk over the last three decades.[187] In the light of the long-awaited Article 140 referendum on the status of Disputed Territories,[188] the forced displacements of, and restrictions on, Sunni Arab populations by all sides carried a distinct flavor of ethnic gerrymandering.

Conclusion: Fragmentation of the State

The recently retaken areas in central and northern Iraq may now be out of ISIL's hands, but they are not firmly in the Iraqi state's control. As local and sub-state forces have grown and strengthened in response to the ISIL challenge, they have increasingly assumed responsibility for security, governance, and other critical services across parts of northern Iraq. This fragmentation of authority has had a number of important consequences for citizens' rights, community recovery, and long-term stability in Iraq.

First, the proliferation and fragmentation of forces has challenged Iraqi state authority and control. In some areas, LHSFs acted only as auxiliaries to ISF. For instance, TMF (Sunni tribal forces) acted as supporting hold forces to Federal Police in areas of Ninewa. In addition, in most areas, even where LHSFs played a significant or even dominant role in security provision, most of the governance, economic, or humanitarian activities were still controlled by local authorities – more so than researchers anticipated at the start of the research. However, in other locations, LHSFs held the area on their own and were the only governing body or force around. For example, Shi'a Turkmen PMF held significant parts of Tuz district in Salah ad-Din and smaller areas of Kirkuk governorate virtually on their own. Although Shi'a PMF technically reported to Iraqi authorities, they held some pockets of territory, in opposition to and beyond the control of ISF. In areas controlled by Kurdish forces (at least until October 2017), Kurdish forces tended to have full and tight control of both security and governance and economic matters. Kurdish control obviously presents a different order of threat to Iraqi authority, given the greater recognition and development of Kurdish forces (the only constitutionally recognized regional force), the longstanding competition between KRG and Baghdad, and the KRG's quest for independence.

The overall effect of having all of these different armed groups, many openly competing with Iraqi forces, was to weaken state control and authority. Even in areas where the Iraqi government was technically in control, the existence of many other armed actors deputized to support them precluded any coherent command and control and undermined the perception that the Iraqi government was in charge. This was even more acute in areas where LHSFs appeared to directly contest or disregard Iraqi authority. For example, in places like Mosul, Tikrit, and their surrounding areas, multiple LHSFs had free reign in the area, sometimes without Iraqi authorities' permission or in direct contradiction of ISF orders. Larger southern PMF groups, despite technically reporting to the Iraqi Prime Minister's office, had a reputation for reporting only to their own command leadership.

In addition, the presence of these many different groups offers opportunities for actors whose interests are different from those of the Iraqi government to influence or disrupt local spaces. Regional actors, like Iran or Turkey, actively backed LHSFs

in different areas as a way to increase their influence and advance their interests in strategic areas. Sometimes the threat to Iraqi authority came from internal competitors. In general, both Kurdish forces and the larger Shi'a PMF groups used the 2014 to 2017 period to increase their leverage in local communities. Establishment or cooption of local forces was an important part of this strategy, with Shi'a PMF establishing strong, local auxiliary forces expansively across Salah ad-Din, in parts of Kirkuk, and in strategic areas of Ninewa, including around Mosul and Tal Afar. Kurdish forces were less active in establishing local auxiliary forces but took steps to increase partnerships with local groups when occupying areas that were not Kurdish-majority. Examples include the establishment of the Jazeera Brigade in Rabi'a and Zummar, backing partners among Christian or Yezidi minority forces, or deepening collaboration with local Kurdish police forces or other tribal forces in Kirkuk. While some of these relationships were superficial or temporary, in many areas they may have offered either Shi'a PMF forces or Kurdish forces opportunities to disrupt the status quo where their interests diverge from the Iraqi governments. This can already be seen in the efforts of Iraqi forces to re-establish control over many of these areas from October 2017, following the Kurdish referendum. Apart from persistent threats posed by ISIL sleeper cells, the main sources of instability and contested control at the time of writing came from areas where LHSFs had developed local forces and lines of control, primarily in the Disputed Territories.

Second, the research suggested some troubling repercussions for civilian protection, return, and rule of law in local areas. In all areas there were reports of local or sub-state forces engaging in ill-treatment and lawlessness, ranging from extrajudicial killings and detentions, to mass property destruction, looting, or extortion of money (such as at checkpoints). Some of these appeared to be criminal acts, but others were driven by political, sectarian, or ethnic motivations. Some of the starker examples of this from the research included:

- Southern Shi'a PMF groups in Baiji looted one of Iraq's most valuable economic assets, the oil refinery, and their prolonged control, the economic damage they wrought, and their violence and harassment against the local population resulted in almost no returns to the area.

- Shi'a Turkmen PMF in the southern half of Tuz and in the smaller area of Taza Khurmatu in Kirkuk have perpetrated abuses against non-Shi'a Turkmen groups that have been so severe as to provoke allegations of ethnic cleansing: they have destroyed and burned homes on a widespread level, committed repeated and severe abuses against those not belonging to the Shi'a Turkmen community, and forcibly displaced or blocked the return of those not belonging to the Shi'a Turkmen communities in these areas, with estimates of more than 70,000 people displaced and prevented from returning to these areas as of the time of research.

- Kurdish forces in control of areas of the Disputed Territories engaged in what appeared to be a deliberate reverse Arabization policy, forcing Sunni Arab IDPs from the area, preventing Sunni Arab return, and eliminating entire Sunni Arab communities along their line of control. This was most prominent in the Kirkuk and Zummar case studies, but there were also similar allegations in northern Tuz and in Rabi'a.

Although LHSF members were responsible for significant examples of extrajudicial violence and rights abuses, they were not alone. In many cases, discriminatory or harmful decisions were implemented by LHSFs in conjunction with ISF or other local authorities. This does not absolve the LHSF members or units involved of their responsibility but points to a different rights or protection issue. For example, the mass forced displacement, and arguably detention, of so-called "ISIL families" in Shirqat was significantly implemented by a range of southern and local PMF groups but was ordered by local and governorate authorities. There were similar issues regarding LHSFs implementing discriminatory treatment of so-called "ISIL families" across the Sunni Arab belt stretching from Qayyara through Shirqat, Baiji, and the Tikrit area, sometimes of their own accord but sometimes at the behest of or in conjunction with ISF and local authorities. Relatedly, while LHSFs manning checkpoints were often at the "tip of the spear" in implementing "vetting" procedures for IDPs to return to these homes, these ambiguous, irregular, and often discriminatory process were established and maintained by Iraqi authorities, a much broader and deeper challenge to rights protection.

The prevalence of so many armed groups, with no clear lines of control or responsibility, in areas like Mosul (as seen soon after its partial recapture in February 2017) challenges the Iraqi government's ability to assert authority and re-establish rule of law.

The proliferation of LHSFs appeared to have a fairly strong negative trend on the rule of law. In general, the greater the number of LHSF forces, the more significant the rule of law effect in a given area. The multitude of quasi-state armed groups in an area itself weakened law enforcement and accountability options for all actors, and also exacerbated the impression that no one actor was in charge (so no real state rule of law). The sheer number of armed groups, alongside weak command and control and few enforcement options, made it difficult for Iraqi authorities to prevent or punish acts of violence and criminality. In areas like Mosul, where new armed groups formed every day, there were so many different armed groups in uniform that even when forces' extrajudicial violence or criminality were reported, it was difficult to identify those responsible. Given that many of these actors had more forces and weaponry than the remaining local police, trying to hold them to account was nearly impossible, one local official said. The prevalence of extrajudicial violence and criminality by groups vested with nominal state authority, and the fact that they appeared to do so with impunity, weakened rule of law.

A final point worth noting is the effect of this mass mobilization on local community dynamics. The mobilization of multiple LHSFs has exacerbated polarization along political, sectarian, or ethnic lines. The spread of LHSFs has caused fault lines to appear not only within the Iraqi state but also within local communities. LHSFs tend to mobilize around a specific ethno-religious identity, and while this may be an effective way to encourage (or restore) trust between residents and security actors or authorities, it simultaneously entrenches a fractured and sectarian identity politics. This may undermine prospects for an inclusive nationalism and furthers the perception that security actors only protect their own.

Moreover, the multiplicity of LHSFs has increased divisions even within the same community. Among Christian and Yezidi groups in Ninewa, for example, one part of the community has aligned with a Baghdad-backed LHSF and another with a KRG-based LHSF. This model of mobilization thus undermines trust and strength, not only between different ethno-religious groups but also within them. Competition between regional and international actors would result in the same effect of community fragmentation and polarization. This was most visible among the Turkmen community where Turkish and Iranian patronage has accentuated the sectarian divide. Christian and Yezidi communities have thus been split between competing political alliances.

In the immediate term, this polarization has heightened the risk of tit-for-tat violence and local conflict. Driven by their own political, sectarian, or ethnic allegiances, members of LHSF used their power to lash out at members of opposing sects, parties, ethnicities, or tribes. Each act of violence threatened to seed new cycles of violence in the future. In addition to retaliating against the population, LHSFs competed with other armed groups, often involving violence. Conflict between different members of the anti-ISIL coalition had already broken out among forces aligned with different political, sectarian, or ethnic affiliations in places like Tuz. Since many of these local groups received support from regional and international actors, conflict between local forces in places like Tal Afar (with strong Turkish and Iranian interests at play) could quickly escalate from local conflicts into regional ones.

For all of these reasons, the mass mobilization and fragmentation of the security sector poses challenges to the restoration of stability, regular governance, and rule of law, and must somehow be reversed. While it was necessary to mobilize LHSFs

to stop ISIL's advance and protect the Iraqi state from collapse, the proliferation of these groups undermines the overall coherence of the Iraqi state's authority. They weaken Iraqi sovereignty and the state's ability to control violence. In the long term these LHSFs may generate more security and political issues than they have resolved. Ultimately, stability cannot exist while these quasi-state local forces remain in their areas of influence.

To counter these trends, any future stabilization strategy must try to address the fragmentation of the Iraqi state not only from the top-down but also from the bottom-up. Re-establishing Iraqi control and stabilizing these areas will require greater attention not only to the macro- but also to the micro-politics of control, to reconstructing local governance spaces, easing local tensions, and reducing competing sources of control from the ground up. The mobilization of and competition between LHSFs is inextricably intermeshed with political dynamics between key stakeholders. Getting these issues under control is a key part of finding a stable balance between different stakeholders within the Iraqi state. As one politician affiliated with Christian forces in Qaraqosh argued, the worst-case scenario for local communities would be that the current stalemate, with different stakeholders' sides competing with each other via local actors, continues. "If there will be a decision on these, then I'm optimistic, but if they just let it go as it is, then it will get worse."

Endnotes

1 Research was conducted by joint teams of international and national researchers in most areas. However, in some more sensitive areas where access was constrained, only local researchers from that area conducted interviews. It was not possible to visit areas under ISIL control during the period of research (e.g., Tal Afar or Hawija in Kirkuk), but secondary research was conducted for a limited number of these areas where it helped to understand LHSF patterns in nearby areas or potential future flashpoints. Interviews focused on key informants. Although some civilians from each area were interviewed, large survey sampling was not part of the methodology. Data and findings from the field were cross-checked against other secondary research and analysis as well as with researchers, observers, or local residents from these areas with some expertise in the LHSF dynamics in that area.

2 The case studies go into greater depth on the background on the takeover and expulsion of ISIL in each area, as well as how different LHSF groups developed and emerged in each area, the nature of their roles and duties. They also include greater specificity and discussion of documented abuses or concerns regarding LHSFs and more information about the general governance, reconstruction, and return climate in each area.

3 Iraq is divided into the semi-autonomous north, populated primarily by Kurds and governed by the KRG, and the south, with a majority Arab population controlled by the central government. The Disputed Territories fall between the two, and as the name suggests, the KRG and Baghdad have disputing claims about the status of these territories. Until 2014, large parts of the Disputed Territories fell under the control of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and the central government. For a more in-depth discussion of the Disputed Territories issues, see Sean Kane, *Iraq's Disputed Territories. A View of the Political Horizon and Implications for U.S. Policy* (Washington, DC: United States Institute for Peace, 2011), https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW69_final.pdf.

4 Under Saddam, the Iraqi security forces numbered roughly 385,000 in the army, 285,000 in the police, and 50,000 in presidential security units, making it one of the strongest state security sectors in the region. James P. Pfiffner, "US Blunders in Iraq: De-Baathification and Disbanding the Army," *Intelligence and National Security* 25, no. 1 (2010): 76–85.

5 The Badr Brigades had their roots in the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s but largely lived in exile for two decades, apart from sporadic engagements against Iraqi forces. Examples are the bombing of the Iraqi embassy in Beirut in 1981 or the brief 1991 uprising against Saddam Hussein following the first Gulf War.

6 The US military invasion in 2003 led to the emergence of these Iranian-backed Shia militias. Since the Iraqi government and its military were still in their nascent stages, these militias filled the security vacuum to guard mosques and meet other, smaller-scale security needs that were at times delegated to them by the US. Militias such as the Badr Organization and Mahdi Army were perceived as legitimate security actors by the Iraqi population in the areas they controlled. For more information on the formation of Shia militias in 2003, see Dylan O'Driscoll and Dave van Zoonen, *The Hashd al-Shaabi and Iraq Subnationalism and the State* (Erbil: Middle East Research Institute, 2017), http://www.meri-k.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/PMF-Report-0.2.pdf, 14–15.

7 Muqtada al-Sadr is the son of Grand Ayatollah Muhammad al-Sadr and the son-in-law of Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Sadr (the ideological founder of the Islamic Dawa Party, which has been the party of all prime ministers Nouri al-Maliki and Haider al-Abadi). The Sadrist movement draws support from the more impoverished Shia districts of central and southern Iraq and boasts a nationalist agenda. It has contributed the second largest cohort of MPs after the Islamic Dawa Party.

8 US Department of Treasury, *Treasury Designates Individual, Entity Posing Threat to Stability in Iraq*, July 2, 2009, https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg195.aspx.

9 David Ignatius, "How ISIS Spread in the Middle East and How to Stop It," *The Atlantic*, October 29, 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/how-isis-started-syria-iraq/412042/.

10 Geneva International Centre for Justice, *Iraq: Tal-Afar, The Next Foreseen Bloodshed* (Geneva: Geneva International Centre for Justice, 2016), http://www.gicj.org/un-special-procedures-appeals/iraq/478-the-situation-in-iraq-tel-afar; Gareth Stansfield, "The Looming Problem of Tal Afar," *Wilson Center Middle East Program Viewpoints*, no. 107 (2016), https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/the_looming_problem_of_tal_afar.pdf; Michael Knights and Matthew Schweitzer, "Shiite Militias Are Crashing the Mosul Offensive," *Foreign Policy*, November 18, 2016, http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/11/18/shiite-militias-are-crashing-the-mosul-offensive/.

11 Knights and Schweitzer, "Shiite Militias Are Crashing the Mosul Offensive." Tal Afar's geography also made it a central crossing point for the influx of foreign fighters from Syria, contributing to the growth of al-Qaeda in the city from 2004 onward. David McCone, Wilbur Scott, and George Mastroianni, "The 3rd ACR in Tal'Afar: Challenges and Adaptations," *Of Interest* (2008): 5, http://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pdffiles/of-interest-9.pdf.

12 Dexter Filkins, "What We Left Behind," *The New Yorker*, April 28, 2014, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/04/28/what-we-left-behind.

13 He strategically sidelined his opponents (for example, he afforded Allawi the symbolic title of Vice Prime Minister) and seized control of the justice system, which led to the arrest of long-time rivals Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi and Finance Minister al-Essawi in 2011. Prime Minister Al-Maliki acted as Minister of Defense from 2010 to 2011 and Minister of the Interior from 2010 to 2014.

14 Christopher Allbritton, among others, offers documentation of abuses against Sunni members of the population by Iraqi police, the connection and infiltration by Shi'a militias, and allegations of sectarian bias coming from top Maliki-appointed officials. Christopher Allbritton, "Why Iraq's Police Are a Menace," *Time,* March 20, 2006, http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1175055,00.html.

15 Ned Parker, Isabel Coles, and Raheem Salman, "Special Report: How Mosul Fell - An Iraqi General Disputes Baghdad's Story," *Reuters,* October 14, 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-gharawi-special-report-idUSKCN0I30Z820141014; Suadad al-Salhy and Tim Arango, "Sunni Militants Drive Iraqi Army Out of Mosul," *New York Times,* June 10, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/11/world/middleeast/militants-in-mosul.html; Andrew Slater, "The Monster of Mosul: How a Sadistic General Helped ISIS Win," *The Daily Beast,* June 19, 2014, http://www.thedailybeast.com/the-monster-of-mosul-how-a-sadistic-general-helped-isis-win; Priyanka Boghani, "In Their Own Words: Sunnis on Their Treatment in Maliki's Iraq," *Frontline*, October 28, 2014, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/in-their-own-words-sunnis-on-their-treatment-in-malikis-iraq/.

16 Zaid al-Ali, "How Maliki Ruined Iraq," *Foreign Policy,* June 19, 2014, http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/06/19/how-maliki-ruined-iraq/.

17 Allbritton, "Why Iraq's Police Are a Menace."

18 Joel Wing, "Militia Mobilization Started in 2013 Due to Renewed Iraq Insurgency," *Musings on Iraq*, August 19, 2014, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.de/2014/08/militia-mobilization-in-iraq-started-in.html; Ned Parker, Ahmed Rasheed, and Raheem Salman, "Sectarian strife threatens Iraq ahead of election," *Reuters*, April 27, 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-strife-idUSBREA3Q0FE20140427.

19 Hayder al-Khoei, "Why 'Emotional' Battle for Tikrit Will Defeat ISIS," *CNN*, March 4, 2015, http://edition.cnn.com/2015/03/04/opinion/tikrit-battle-opinion/index.htm.

20 Human Rights Watch, *Ruinous Aftermath. Militias Abuses Following Iraq's Recapture of Tikrit* (New York: 2015), https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/09/20/ruinous-aftermath/militias-abuses-following-iraqs-recapture-tikrit; al-Khoei, "Why 'Emotional' Battle for Tikrit Will Defeat ISIS."

21 A fuller discussion of the PMF mobilization process is provided in O'Driscoll and van Zoonen, *The Hashd al-Shaabi*.

22 Suadad al-Salhy and Tim Arango, "Iraq Militants, Pushing South, Aim at Capital."

23 For information on the PMF and ISF repelling ISIL's advance on Samarra, see Calum Paton, "Inside Samarra: Iraq's holy city that has withstood a decade-long Isis and al-Qaeda onslaught," *International Business Times*, January 18, 2017, http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/inside-samarra-iraqs-holy-city-that-has-withstood-decade-long-isis-al-qaeda-onslaught-1595177; Leith Fadel, "ISIS falls apart in Sammara countryside as the Iraqi forces liberate several villages," *AMN*, February 3, 2013, https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/isis-falls-apart-samarra-countryside-full-retreat/.

24 Babak Dehghanpisheh, "Special Report: The Fighters of Iraq Who Answer to Iran," *Reuters,* November 12, 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-militias-specialreport-idUSKCN0IW0ZA20141112.

25 Mark Tran and Spencer Ackerman, "Iraqi and Kurdish forces launch attacks to recapture towns from Isis."

26 "Peshmerga Fight ISIS in Nineveh; Militants an Hour Away from Baghdad," *Rudaw,* June 26, 2014, http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/260620141.

27 "Iraq Christians Flee as Islamic State Takes Qaraqosh," *BBC*, August 7, 2017, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28686998.

28 A total of 5,270 Yezidis are estimated to have been captured by ISIL in 2014, most of them women and children. Countless others died, and mass graves are still being discovered as more territory is explored and liberated. Over 150,000 Yezidis fled Sinjar to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and thousands more fled to Mount Sinjar. Jeremy P. Barker, "A Flicker of Hope? Implications of the Genocide Designation for Religious Minorities in Iraq," *Religious Freedom Institute*, July 30, 2016, https://www.religiousfreedominstitute.org/cornerstone/2016/7/30/a-flicker-of-hope-implications-of-the-genocide-designation-for-religious-minorities-in-iraq; Samuel Smith, "ISIS to Crucified Christians: 'If You Love Jesus, You Will Die Like Jesus'," *Christian Post*, November 28, 2016, http://www.christianpost.com/news/isis-told-crucified-christians-if-you-love-jesus-you-will-die-like-jesus-171766/; "Iraq: ISIS Abducting, Killing, Expelling Minorities*", Human Rights Watch*, July 19, 2014, https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/19/iraq-isis-abducting-killing-expelling-minorities; Rukmini Callimachi, "ISIS Enshrines a Theology of Rape," *The New York Times,* August 13, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/14/world/middleeast/isis-enshrines-a-theology-of-rape.html?_r=0.

29 Smith, "ISIS to Crucified Christians: 'If You Love Jesus, You Will Die Like Jesus'"; Nina Shea, "The Islamic State's Christian and Yizidi Sex Slaves," *Hudson Institute,* July 31, 2015, https://www.hudson.org/research/11486-the-islamic-state-s-christian-and-yizidi-sex-slaves; Eliza Griswold, "Is this the End of Christianity in the Middle East?," *New York Times,* July 22, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/26/magazine/is-this-the-end-of-christianity-in-the-middle-east.html?_r=0.

30 Some PKK-affiliated groups were operating in areas in proximity to the research sites documented in northern Ninewa as well as, to a lesser extent, around Kirkuk. For example, the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS), which are hostile to the KRG, were operating in and around the Zummar-Rabi'a front, creating the potential for a clash with the KRG-affiliated forces operating there.

31 Caleb Weiss, "Iranian general at the forefront of the Tikrit offensive," *Threat Matrix: A Blog of the Long War Journal*, March 5, 2015, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/03/iranian-general-at-the-forefront-of-the-tikrit-offensive.php.

32 Dehghanpisheh, "Special Report: The Fighters of Iraq."

33 Much of the Peshmerga training was organized through the Kurdistan Training Coordination Center (KTCC), a joint training mission that has trained 18,000 Peshmerga and Kurdish-controlled forces since 2014. As of mid-2017, the KTCC was under a rotating Italian and German command and staffed by military trainers from Italy, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, Finland, Norway, Canada, Hungary, and Slovenia. Training was supposed to be provided only to unified brigades under the Ministry of Peshmerga to avoid becoming enmeshed in rivalries between forces allied with the KDP or PUK. However, the Ministry of Peshmerga selected which forces received training, and it was ultimately difficult for the member states working through the KTCC to verify or limit the fighters sent to them for training. The US was the predominant provider of the weapons and equipment used in the training. As a result, all units had to pass standard US vetting procedures, including checks for terrorist affiliations and credible allegations of gross human rights violations against the unit (not individuals). All US funding provided under the Iraq Train and Equip Authority (known as section 1326, for the section of the National Defense Authorization Act it falls under) must be "vetted for associations with terrorist groups or with groups associated with the Iranian government, and must commit to promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law." Congressional Research Service, "In Focus: Train and Equip Authorities to Counter the Islamic State," January 9, 2015, https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc811092/m2/1/high_res_d/IF10040_2015Jan09.pdf. For more on vetting for credible allegations of gross human rights violations under the Leahy law, see https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-leahy-law-and-human-rights-accountability-in-afghanistan-too-little-too-late-or-a-model-for-the-future/.

34 In addition to the US, other international Coalition members have also been involved in training and support for the TMF, including personnel from the UK, the Netherlands, and Spain.

35 As noted earlier, the PKK-linked forces were not as prominent in the research areas examined and are not the focus here. However, there was some presence of PKK-affiliated forces near the areas documented in northern Ninewa and in Kirkuk.

36 Michael Knights, "Iraq's Popular Demobilization," *Al-Jazeera English,* February 26, 2016, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/02/iraq-popular-demobilisation-160224050939178.html; Michael Knights, *The Future of Iraqi Armed Forces* (Baghdad: Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies, 2016). Michael Georgy and Stephen Kalin, "Iraq to adjust military spending, hire 10,000 new forces: minister," *Reuters*, October 28, 2015, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-spending-idUSKCN0SM23520151028; Ghassan Charbel, "Iraqi PM talks Iran, IS and Saudi Arabia," trans. Sami-Joe Abboud, *al-Monitor*, January 21, 2015, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2015/01/iraq-abadi-iran-relations-islamic-state.html.

37 Estimates of the number of Peshmerga forces vary. Some estimate it to be as high as 200,000, but most presume that this includes a significant number of ghost soldiers or largely inactive force members. Dr. Michael Knights, *The Future of Iraq's Armed Forces* (Baghdad: Al-Bayan Center Publications Series, 2016), https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/The-future.pdf.

38 "Badr Organization," Counter Extremism Project, http://www.counterextremism.com/threat/badr-organization; Susannah George, "Breaking Badr," *Foreign Policy,* November 6, 2014, http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/11/06/breaking-badr.

39 Knights, "Iraq's Popular Demobilization."

40 Dylan O'Driscoll and Dave van Zoonen, *The Hashd al-Shaabi and Iraq Subnationalism and the State* (Erbil: Middle East Research Institute, 2017), http://www.meri-k.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/PMF-Report-0.2.pdf.

41 "Iraq: Ban Abusive Militias from Mosul Operation," Human Rights Watch, July 31, 2016, https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/07/31/iraq-ban-abusive-militias-mosul-operation; "Iraq: Ethnic Fighting Endangers Civilians Kurds, Turkmen, Arabs Clash in Northern District," *Human Rights Watch*, January 13, 2016, https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/13/iraq-ethnic-fighting-endangers-civilians; Human Rights Watch, *Ruinous Aftermath. Militias Abuses Following Iraq's Recapture of Tikrit* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2015), https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/09/20/ruinous-aftermath/militias-abuses-following-iraqs-recapture-tikrit.

42 Ibid.

43 Abu Dura and Mustafa al Sheibani were added to the US global terrorist lists in January 2008 and are reported to have returned to Iraq as well as implicitly re-engaged. A number of other former leaders or commanders from AAH were also added to the US global terrorist list for their coordination of or engagement in attacks against US forces from 2006 to 2009. However, it is unclear if some of these other commanders have re-engaged with AAH in current operations. Bill Roggio, "US Airstrikes in Amerli Supported Deadly Shi'a Group," *Long War Journal,* September 2, 2014, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/09/us_airstrikes_in_ame.php.

44 Babak Dehghanpisheh, "Special Report: The Fighters of Iraq Who Answer to Iran," *Reuters,* November 12, 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-militias-specialreport-idUSKCN0IW0ZA20141112.

45 Knights, "Iraq's Popular Demobilization."

46 US Department of Treasury, *Treasury Designates Individual, Entity Posing Threat to Stability in Iraq*, July 2, 2009, https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg195.aspx.

47 Nour Malas, "The Militia Commander Beating Back ISIS in Iraq Makes the U.S. Nervous," *Wall Street Journal,* June 2, 2016, http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-militia-commander-beating-back-isis-in-iraq-makes-the-u-s-nervous-1464890675.

48 O'Driscoll and van Zoonen, *Hashd al-Shaabi and Iraq*.

49 See *supra* note 41.

50 Matthew Levitt and Phillip Smyth, "Kataib al-Imam Ali: Portrait of an Iraqi Shiite Militant Group Fighting ISIS," *Washington Institute*, January 5, 2015, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/kataib-al-imam-ali-portrait-of-an-iraqi-shiite-militant-group-fighting-isis.

51 See, e.g., Richard Spencer, "Iraqi Shi'a Militia Who Fought ISIL Condemned for Revenge Beheadings," *The Telegraph,* September 10, 2014, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/11087584/Iraqi-Shi'a-militia-who-fought-Isil-condemned-for-revenge-beheadings.html.

52 Levitt and Smyth, "Kataib al-Imam Ali;" al-Shibeeb, "Iraqi Tribes Ready."

53 Bilgay Duman, *A New Controversial Actor in Post-ISIS Iraq: Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi*, trans. Sercan Doğan. (Ankara: ORSAM, 2015), http://www.orsam.org.tr/files/Raporlar/rapor198/198eng.pdf.

54 Ned Parker, Babak Dehghanpisheh, and Isabel Coles, "How Iran's Military Chief Operates in Iraq," *Reuters,* February 24, 2015, http://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/mideast-crisis-committee/.

55 O'Driscoll and van Zoonen, *Hashd al-Shaabi and Iraq*.

56 "Mahdi Army," *Stanford Mapping Militant Organizations,* last updated January 17, 2017, http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/57.

57 O'Driscoll and van Zoonen, *Hashd al-Shaabi and Iraq*.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

60 Fazel Hawramy, "Kurdish Peshmerga Divisions Hamper War Effort," *Al-Monitor,* January 13, 2015, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/01/iraq-kurdish-peshmerga-division-islamic-state.html.

61 KDP-commanded Peshmerga were traditionally supported by Turkey, but these ties eroded due to the KRG's perceived cooperation with PKK-affiliated forces in the war against ISIL. The PUK had received some support from Iran, though the degree of affiliation and assistance has long been unclear.

62 Wladimir Van Wilgenburg and Mario Fumertonn, *Kurdistan's Political Armies: The Challenge of Unifying the Peshmerga Forces* (Beirut: Carnegie Middle East Center, 2015), http://carnegieendowment.org/files/ACMR_WilgenburgFumerton_Kurdistan_English_final.pdf.

63 One of the main initiatives was the Kurdistan Training Coordination Centre (KTCC), a major training and equipment center for the MoP brigades, with the US providing equipment and weapons and seven other countries providing training. Other international actors also provided training and equipment to Peshmerga forces unilaterally, including Canada and France.

64 US Embassy and Consulates in Iraq, *Special Presidential Envoy Brett McGurk in Iraq*, June 21, 2016, http://iraq.usembassy.gov/pr-062116.html.

65 Ali Kurdistani, "Why Sunnis Don't Want Shiite Militia in the Mosul Offensive," *Rudaw,* July 1, 2016, http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/01072016.

66 O'Driscoll and van Zoonen, *Hashd al-Shaabi and Iraq*.

67 The group was politically sponsored (i.e. put forward for PMF membership) by the Shabak politician and Member of Parliament Hunain Qaddo. Wat Qaddo is the tactical commander in charge of the 30th Brigade.

68 Numerous interviewees from all sides, including Christian political representatives, foreign diplomatic personnel, and Iraqi military leadership, warned that the Babylon Brigades' propensity for revenge attacks and abuses against Sunnis in their area of operations risked instigating further cycles of violence and conflict. One coalition official interviewed in July 2017 noted that the Babylon Brigades had reached such a level that both the Iraqi National Security Service (NSS) and PMF leadership were trying to curb them because they were getting "out of control."

69 Jack Moore, "4,000-Strong Christian Militias Formed to Fight ISIS in Northern Iraq," *Newsweek,* February 4, 2015, http://europe.newsweek.com/4000-strong-christian-militia-formed-fight-isis-northern-iraq-304371?rm=eu.

70 Matt Cetti-Roberts, "Inside the Christian Militias Defending the Ninevah Plains," *War is Boring*, March 7, 2015, https://medium.com/war-is-boring/inside-the-christian-militias-defending-the-nineveh-plains-fe4a10babeed.

71 Based on information obtained in interviews with NPF representatives, members of the KTCC, and diplomatic officials involved with the Coalition, the NPF have received training as part of the Peshmerga through the KTCC, which is the Peshmerga training program supported by nine coalition members, including Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Hungary, among other nations.

72 Michael Knights and Yousif Kalian, *Confidence- and Security-Building Measures in the Nineveh Plains* (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute, 2017), http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/confidence-and-security-building-measures-in-the-nineveh-plains.

73 "Christians Reclaim Iraq Village from ISIS," *CBS News*, November 13, 2014, http://www.cbsnews.com/news/christian-iraq-village-kurdish-peshmerga-fighters-bakufa-isis/; Cetti-Roberts, "Inside the Christian Militias." Reports indicate that two Americans and eight foreigners have joined the militia. Peter Henderson, "Iraq's Christian Paramilitaries Split in IS Fight," *Al Monitor*, October 30, 2014, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/10/iraq-christian-paramilitary-forces-nineveh.html; Rebecca Collard, "Meet the Americans Who Have Joined an Iraqi Militia to Fight ISIS," *Time,* March 27, 2015, http://time.com/3761211/isis-americans-iraqi-militias/.

74 The US, for example, has allocated funding for Christian militias in the Ninewa Plains. The US Defense Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2018, H.R. 2810, which at the time of research had passed the House but was awaiting Senate action, allocates funding to "vetted" Christian militias in the Nineveh Plains Council. National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018, H.R. 2810, 115th Cong. (2017), 612. In 2016, Senate Bill 2943, authorizing US Department of Defense funds for fiscal year 2017, had also stated that providing security for Christian minorities in the Ninewa Plains was a defense priority for the United States. National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017, S. 2943, (2016), 614.

75 Christine van den Toorn and Sarah Mathieu-Comtois, *Sinjar after ISIS: Returning to disputed territory* (Utrecht: PAX for Peace, 2016).

76 Christine McCaffray van den Toorn, "The Wars after the War for Sinjar. How Washington Can Avert a New Civil War," *War on the Rocks,* June 20, 2010, http://warontherocks.com/2016/06/the-wars-after-the-war-for-sinjar-how-washington-can-avert-a-new-civil-war/; Mohammed A. Salih, "With the Islamic State Gone from Sinjar, Kurdish Groups Battle for Control," *Al-Monitor,* December 10, 2015, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/12/iraq-kurdistan-sinjar-liberated-isis-hegemony.html.

77 David Ignatius, "How the Kurds' Neighbors Play Games to Block the Expansion of 'Greater Kurdistan'," *Washington Post,* May 27, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2016/05/27/kurdish-factions/.

78 Ibid.

79 Human Rights Watch, *Ruinous Aftermath. Militias Abuses Following Iraq's Recapture of Tikrit* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2015), https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/09/20/ruinous-aftermath/militias-abuses-following-iraqs-recapture-tikrit. Human Rights Watch, *Iraq: Fallujah Abuses Test Control of Militias. Investigate Government Command Responsibility; ISIS Stops Civilians from Fleeing* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2016), https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/06/09/iraq-fallujah-abuses-test-control-militias; "Once Fixable, Baiji Refinery Plundered Beyond Repair," *Iraq Oil Report*, January 28, 2016, http://www.iraqoilreport.com/news/fixable-baiji-refinery-plundered-beyond-repair-17812/.

80 UN Habitat, *City Profile*, 21.

81 Campbell MacDiarmid, "Mosul University after ISIL: Damaged but Defiant," *Al Jazeera,* January 26, 2017, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/01/mosul-university-isil-damaged-defiant-170120090207277.html. Mosul University is one of the largest universities in the Middle East, with historically among the strongest reputations for academic centers in Iraq. It was destroyed and looted under ISIL; UN Habitat, *City Profile*, 77. Mosul is also home to several significant, ancient archeological sites, including the Ancient City of Nineveh, Nirgal Palace Gate, and Kuyunijak hill, many of which have also undergone significant damage.

82 Al-Jazeera, "Sunni Rebels Declare New 'Islamic Caliphate'," *Al-Jazeera,* June 30, 2014, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/06/isil-declares-new-islamic-caliphate-201462917326669749.html. Please provide access date; Martin Chulov and Kareem Shaheen, "Destroying Great Mosque of al-Nuri is ISIS Declaring Defeat," *Guardian*, June 22, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/21/mosuls-grand-al-nouri-mosque-blown-up-by-isis-fighters.

83 Due to the ongoing fighting, only a limited number of field visits to certain, limited parts of Mosul were permitted. However, in addition to limited field visits researchers conducted significant interviews outside of the city, including with local officials in charge of Mosul, those delivering local aid or support to the city, and to civilians from the area. Mostafa Ahmad Hassan contributed to the local research.

84 A more detailed description of the different ISF engaged in Mosul operations is available in RISE Foundation, *Post-ISIS Mosul Context Analysis* (Erbil: RISE Foundation, 2017), https://rise-foundation.org/selected-reports/.

85 Coalition tracking (shared with researchers) suggested that the overall number of TMFs was small: a total of 11 units as of the end of February 2017, or approximately 2,700 forces. While some of these TMF forces were drawn from East Mosul communities, others were deployed from other areas of Ninewa, such as Qayyara. The same pattern was emerging in West Mosul at the end of the research period.

86 Although initially an independent force, Nujaifi's forces joined the formal PMF umbrella following the institution of the PMF law in late 2016. In an interview for this report, Nujaifi said that while he believed the law was a "mistake" and would prefer to put his forces under the regular Iraqi forces, "the PMF law is the law, and so we need to join the PMF."

87 For similar observations by other monitoring organizations, see, RISE Foundation, *Post-ISIS Mosul*, 12.

88 RISE Foundation, *Post-ISIS Mosul*, 18.

89 Research was conducted by a small team in Qayyara over the course of February and March 2017 and included interviews with local officials, members of the Tribal Mobilization Forces (TMF), tribal elders and *mukhtar*s, and local civilians, including in the local IDP camp. Site visits were conducted in Qayyara city, in smaller villages surrounding it, in villages in the Hajj Ali and Shura subdistricts, and along the main road from Qayyara city to Hamam Ali. Mahmoud Zaki contributed significantly to the research and analysis

90 It is worth noting that proportionately more TMF forces were active in Qayyara compared to other parts of Ninewa in part due to the stage of the conflict in other areas. The largest Sunni population center, Mosul,

was still being liberated (West Mosul) or had only recently been liberated (East Mosul). Thus, hold forces like the TMF had not yet been fully mobilized. In addition, because of its urban nature, those engaged in the TMF program and local leaders suggested it was not as conducive to tribal mobilization as an area like Qayyara, which is more rural and in which tribes play a greater role in social structures.

91 This is based on tracking conducted by the US Diplomatic Mission to Iraq and shared with the members of the research study.

92 This is based on tracking and information provided by the US Diplomatic Mission to Iraq and shared with the members of the research study.

93 Unlike other areas visited, there were frequent checkpoints inside the district that strictly enforced identity checks. Entry into the district required special authorization from the federal police and was scrutinized at multiple points.

94 ISIL's abuse of religious minorities in Iraq, including the Christians in Qaraqosh, has been declared an act of genocide by the European Parliament, the United States, the United Kingdom, and other international actors. Jack Moore, "European Parliament Recognizes ISIS Killing of Religious Minorities as Genocide," *Newsweek,* February 4, 2016, http://www.newsweek.com/european-parliament-recognizes-isis-killing-religious-minorities-genocide-423008; European Parliament, Resolution 2529, European Parliament, "Resolution on the Systematic Mass Murder of Religious Minorities by the So-called 'ISIS/Daesh'," (2016), http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-%2f%2fEP%2f%2fNONSGML%2bMOTION%2bP8-RC-2016-0149%2b0%2bDOC%2bPDF%2bV0%2f%2fEN; Andrea Mitchell, Cassandra Vinograd, F. Brinley Bruton, and Abigail Williams, "Kerry: ISIS is Committing Genocide against Yezidis, Christians and Shiite Muslims," *NBC News,* March 17, 2016, http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/kerry-designate-isis-atrocities-genocide-n540706.

95 Jeremy P. Barker, "A Flicker of Hope?"

96 Numerous interviewees from all sides, including Christian political representatives, foreign diplomatic personnel, and Iraqi military leadership, warned that the Babylon Brigades' propensity for revenge attacks and abuses against Sunnis in their area of operations risked instigating further cycles of violence and conflict. One coalition official interviewed in July 2017 noted that the Babylon Brigades had reached such a level that both the Iraqi National Security Service (NSS) and PMF leadership were trying to curb them because they were getting "out of control."

97 Researchers visited many of these checkpoints in the course of research. Mostafa Ahmad Hassan contributed to the local research. Additional interviews with other Christian or Chaldo-Assyrian forces and political leaders, and with affected civilians, were conducted in Erbil.

98 For more see "Freed from ISIS, but Iraq's Qaraqosh is now a Ghost Town," *Al Arabiya English*, March 29, 2017, http://english.alarabiya.net/en/features/2017/03/29/Freed-from-ISIS-but-Iraq-s-Qaraqosh-is-now-a-ghost-town.html.

99 Allegations that Shabak PMF may have been involved in looting and damage in Qaraqosh and surrounding areas immediately after it was recaptured was alleged by several interviewees and has been mentioned in other human rights reporting. "Looting, Destruction by Forces Fighting ISIS; No Apparent Military Necessity for Home Demolitions," *Human Rights Watch*, February 16, 2016, https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/02/16/iraq-looting-destruction-forces-fighting-isis.

100 Many former residents from Christian areas in the Ninewa Plains have resettled in Erbil's large Christian area. Humanitarian actors interviewed said that they frequently suggest they would not return or at least not yet, because their families are integrated into the Erbil community. Children are enrolled in local schools and families are engaged in local employment in Erbil.

101 The research builds on expert interviews with security, community, and political representatives conducted in Rabi'a, Gabran village (Rabi'a), Zummar, and Dohuk by Andras Derzsi-Horvath and Erica Gaston in February 2017. In addition, a local researcher conducted additional community interviews in Rabi'a sub-district and five interviews with Rabi'a IDPs in May 2017. Faysal Younis provided invaluable facilitation support.

102 The leader of the local TMF force said his fighters received training and light equipment through the TMF program and were trained at West Ninewa Camp by Coalition forces (notably including Spanish forces), which was confirmed by Coalition sources. However, the West Ninewa camp was closed in November and December 2016 due to frictions with the Iraqi government, Coalition and local sources told researchers for this study. See also: "Member of Parliament Announces Formation of 'Ninewa Lions' Force to Liberate the Western and Central Parts of the Governorate," *Al-Sumaria*, May 12, 2016.

103 The first Arab battalion, composed mainly of the Juhaysh, Muamara, Sharabi, and Jibbour tribes, graduated in February 2017 and some were deployed in March 2017 to Sinjar to reinforce the Rojava

Peshmerga forces that clashed with PKK-sympathizers near Khana Sur town. Most of them, however, took up duty in Zummar and Ayyadhiyya sub-districts. The second battalion, called al-Ajeel Battalion, graduated in July 2017 and is composed mostly of Shammar as well as other tribesmen from Rabi'a. Sheikh Abdallah al-Yawar, an important figure during the US-led "Awakening" or *sahwa*, has helped with recruitment but takes no formal role in the Jazeera Brigade.

104 The head of Kurdish security forces on the Zummar-Rabi'a front, Colonel General Za'im Ali, hinted that the Jazeera Brigade could be deployed in combat in areas outside Rabi'a, such as Sinjar district. This move would lead to a delicate situation because Shammar tribal forces in Sinjar were allied with the KDP's fierce enemy, the Sinjar Resistance Units – a Yezidi force alleged to be loyal to the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). However, this did not materialize in the period of research and since the Jazeera Brigade forces in question dissolved after Iraqi forces reassumed control following the Kurdish referendum, it appeared unlikely to happen in the future. Isabel Coles, "In Remote Corner of Iraq, an Unlikely Alliance Forms Against Islamic State," *Reuters,* May 11, 2016, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-sinjar-idUSKCN0Y20TC.

105 "'Rojava'...Kurds who are prohibited from fighting the Assad Regime," *Al-Arabi al-Jadeed*, September 13, 2015 (author translation).

106 The original Zeravanis are Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) units that surrendered to the KDP-Peshmerga. Until 2014, the Zeravani received their salaries from the KRG's Ministry of Interior, but they have since been brought under the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs for training, weapons, etc. The Zeravani are led by Aziz al-Waysi and only present in KDP-controlled areas.

107 "Kurdish Presidency Says Rojava Peshmerga More Legitimate than YBS," *Rudaw Online*, March 3, 2017, http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/ad773996-3587-4281-ba85-805f2d69cd83/UPDATE--Clashes-halt-between-Rojava-Peshmerga--PKK-affiliate-in-Sinjar.

108 Sean Kane, *Iraq's Disputed Territories. A View of the Political Horizon and Implications for U.S. Policy* (Washington, DC:United States Institute for Peace, 2011), https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW69_final.pdf, 21.

109 The research builds on expert interviews with security, community, and political representatives conducted in Rabi'a, Gabran village (Rabi'a), Zummar, and Dohuk by Andras Derzsi-Horvath and Erica Gaston in February 2017. In addition, a local researcher conducted additional community interviews in Rabi'a sub-district and five interviews with Rabi'a IDPs in May 2017.

110 The force is recruited from the Gergeri, Hasani, Mira, and Tai tribes, among others. The Gergeri are Arabized Kurds who live mostly south from Zummar (south of the Mosul-Rabi'a road). They were allowed to stay in their areas during the Arabization campaign in the 1970s, but lived with a number of restrictions. For example, they could not give Kurdish names to their children. The Kurdish tribal force received training by the KDP-led command in Dohuk, but they were not integrated into the formal structure of Kurdish Security Forces. Kurdish tribal forces were deployed (with Peshmerga) to patrol the border with Syria in the north, including the seven Kurdish villages in neighboring Rabi'a sub-district, as well as some areas on the frontline with ISIL in the south.

111 Despite reports of the Jazeera Brigade's mobilization to support the Rojava in spring 2017 as it clashed with supporters of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) in Sinjar, key informants claimed that the Jazeera Brigade has not been functionally deployed; its members had not yet undertaken any security tasks. The head of Kurdish security forces on the Zummar-Rabi'a front, Colonel General Za'im Ali, agreed that the biggest asset of the tribal forces was their local knowledge and argued that recruiting them under Peshmerga forces might also prevent them from joining extremist forces.

112 Radio Zummar's Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/radio.zummar/posts/1076470142455924.

113 Amnesty International, *Northern Iraq*.

114 Human Rights Watch, *Iraqi Kurdistan: Arabs Displaced, Cordoned Off, Detained* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2015), https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/02/25/iraqi-kurdistan-arabs-displaced-cordoned-detained; Amnesty International, *Northern Iraq: Satellite Images Back up Evidence of Deliberate Mass Destruction in Peshmerga-Controlled Arab Villages* (London: Amnesty International, 2016), https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/01/northern-iraq-satellite-images-back-up-evidence-of-deliberate-mass-destruction-in-peshmerga-controlled-arab-villages/.

115 Amnesty International, *Northern Iraq*.

116 IOM, *Obstacles to Return*.

117 Human Rights Watch, *Iraqi Kurdistan*.

118 Amnesty International, *Northern Iraq*; According to a Reuters report, 50 Arab families were allowed to return to Zummar town as of September 2016. Isabel Coles and Stephen Kalin, "In Fight Against Islamic State, Kurds Expand their Territory," *Reuters,* October 10, 2016, http://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/mideast-crisis-kurds-land/.

119 BBC News, "Iraq rejects Kurdish offer to 'freeze' independence," October 26, 2017, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-41760519; Adam Lucente, "Kurds divided over blame for loss of Kirkuk," *Al-Monitor,* November 12, 2017, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/11/syria-iraq-turkey-kirkuk-referendum-kurds-loss-blame.html; Rudaw News, "Peshmerga respond to, push back Iraqi militia attack near Zummar," October 26, 2017, http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/2510201710; Katie Klain and Lisa Hintz, "A Series of Miscalculations: The Kurdish Referendum and its Fallout," December 19, 2017, https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/12/series-miscalculations-kurdish-referendum-and-fallout/.

120 Because Tal Afar was still under ISIL control at the time of research, it was the only case study location not visited by researchers. Secondary research was the primary basis for analysis, but the research team also conducted interviews with local officials, tribal leaders, and community members from or aware of trends in Tal Afar during the course of research in other locations in Ninewa. Frauke Maas led the initial research and writing of this case study. For more see Frauke Maas, "Tal Afar," *Global Public Policy institute*, http://www.gppi.net/publications/iraq-after-isil-tal-afar-city/?L=322#c1993.

121 Ramzy Mardini, *Tal Afar: Prospect for Escalation*. Atlantic Council MENA Source (Washington: Atlantic Council, 2016), http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/tal-afar-prospect-for-escalation; "Iraq's Tal Afar: Turkmen town in heart of anti-IS war," *Al-Monitor*, October 31, 2016, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/afp/2016/10/iraq-conflict-talafar.html.

122 Gareth Stansfield, *The Looming Problem of Tal Afar*. Wilson Center Viewpoints No. 107. (Washington, DC: Wilson Center, 2016), https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/the_looming_problem_of_tal_afar.pdf; Dave van Zoonen and Khogir Wirya, *Turkmen in Tal Afar. Perceptions of Reconciliation and Conflict*. MERI Policy Report. (Erbil: Middle East Research Institute, 2017), http://www.meri-k.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Turkmen-in-Tal-Afar-Report.pdf; George Packer, "The Lesson of Tal Afar: Is it too late for the Administration to correct its course in Iraq?" *The New Yorker*, April 10, 2006, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/04/10/the-lesson-of-tal-afar; Michael Fitzsimmons, John D. Steinbruner, Michael O'Hanlon, George Quester, Robert Sprinkle, and Peter Wien, *Governance, Identity, and Counterinsurgency Strategy* (Ann Arbor: ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 2009), 77–78.

123 Geneva International Centre for Justice, *Iraq: Tal-Afar, The Next Foreseen Bloodshed* (Geneva: Geneva International Centre for Justice, 2016), http://www.gicj.org/un-special-procedures-appeals/iraq/478-the-situation-in-iraq-tel-afar; Stansfield, *The Looming Problem of Tal Afar*; Michael Knights and Matthew Schweitzer, *Shiite Militias Are Crashing the Mosul Offensive*. The Washington Institute Policy Analysis. (Washington: The Washington Institute, 2016), http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/shiite-militias-are-crashing-the-mosul-offensive.

124 Knights and Schweitzer, *Shiite Militias Are Crashing the Mosul Offensive*.

125 Shelly Kittleson, "Shiite forces advance on Tal Afar in Mosul operation," *Al-Monitor*, December 1, 2016, http://al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/12/tal-afar-iraq-mosul-turkey-pmu-syria.html; "Mosul battle: Iraqi forces cut IS escape route to Tal Afar," *BBC*, March 1, 2017, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-39126647.

126 Bill Roggio and Amir Toumaj, "Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces close in on Tal Afar," *FDD's Long War Journal*, November 23, 2016, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/11/iraqi-popular-mobilization-forces-close-in-on-tal-afar.php; Patrick Cockburn, "'Isis is full of killers, the worst come from Tal Afar': Bitter fight for city ahead and the violence may not end there," *The Independent*, November 15, 2016, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-mosul-offensive-latest-tal-afar-killers-iraq-sectarian-violence-a7419536.html; Geneva International Centre for Justice, *Iraq: Tal-Afar, The Next Foreseen Bloodshed*.

127 Roggio and Toumaj, "Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces close in on Tal Afar."

128 This is based on tracking conducted by the US Diplomatic Mission to Iraq shared with the members of the research study.

129 Manis and Kaválek, *The Catch-22 in Ninevah: The Regional Security Complex Dynamics between Turkey and Iran*.

130 IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix, as of December 2016.

131 Prevailing Shi'a PMF forces reportedly maintained their own detention sites in Salah ad-Din, Baiji, Samarra, Balad, and Hamra. Member of Parliament Badr al-Fahal confirmed this fact publicly on television (and later said he received threats as a result of his disclosure).

132 Field research was led by Ibrahim Khalaf. Mahmoud Zaki also contributed significantly to the research and analysis. Frauke Maas contributed significant background research and verification.

133 Nearly all the Sunni tribal interviewees and local residents described known abuses by the Shi'a PMF in their areas, most commonly the looting in Tikrit and Baiji as well as regular unlawful detentions, kidnappings, and other incidents of abuse against local citizens and their property. Residents in Dour and al-Alam as well as separate reporting by rights groups such as Human Rights Watch (HRW) suggested that Shi'a PMF committed most of the property damage and destruction in al-Alam and Dour after they had liberated the areas, presumably in retaliation for the Camp Speicher massacre. HRW found evidence of 540 destroyed homes, 430 torched houses, and 95 damaged shops. An HRW analysis of satellite imagery suggested that large sections of Dour town were damaged or destroyed between March 8 and 9 (after liberation) and stated that locals interviewed blamed the destruction on Kata'ib Hezbollah (Human Rights Watch, *Ruinous Aftermath*). According to locals, in one of the extreme examples of extrajudicial detentions during the liberation of Dour, Hezbollah fighters came to the area where residents had fled (to avoid the fighting) and detained 300 men aged 14 to 50, only 11 of whom had been confirmed as released in the summer of 2017.

134 The most influential Shi'a PMF in Tikrit, Dour, and al-Alam at the time of writing were Badr, AAH, and Hezbollah. The Khorasani Brigades were also active in nearby areas but did not attempt to hold territory. The Ali al-Akbar Brigade was also present.

135 For more detail on each of these groups, see the original case study by Erica Gaston, with Frauke Maas, available at http://www.gppi.net/publications/iraq-after-isil-tikrit.

136 Two of the four tribal PMF in Dour were fairly new at the time of research. The newest one was only established in July 2017. It was not yet clear what their role and affiliation would be. One was thought to be affiliated with the Khorasani Brigade, although it had not yet engaged in joint operations with them. The other, more well-established force in Dour coordinated with both Badr and the local authorities.

137 Most of the allegations of misconduct or abusive behavior (most frequently kidnapping and detention of locals as well as looting and the destruction of property) were attributed to Hezbollah and AAH. Local officials and tribal elders generally agreed that most Badr fighters abided by the law and that the Badr Organization (both higher-level authorities and fighters) was more cooperative and supportive of locals than other PMF groups.

138 For more, see the original Tikrit case study at http://www.gppi.net/publications/iraq-after-isil-tikrit. See also Special Report: After Iraqi Forces Take Tikrit, a Wave of Looting and Lynching," *Reuters*, April 3, 2015, accessed June 27, 2017, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-tikrit-special-re-idUSKBN0MU1DP20150403; "Shi'a Fighters Leave Tikrit amid Looting Complaints," *Al-Jazeera*, April 4, 2015, accessed June 27, 2017, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/04/Shi'a-fighters-leave-tikrit-looting-complaints-150404194947715.html.

139 Ibid.

140 Ibid.

141 International researchers were not given permission to travel to Shirqat. Instead field research was carried out solely by Amin al-Qaisi. Bahra Saleh was the primary author for the initial development of this case study, with supporting analysis and research by Erica Gaston András Derzsi-Horváth, and Frauke Maas, available at http://www.gppi.net/publications/iraq-after-isil-shirqat/.

142 After recapturing Tikrit in April 2015 and Baiji in October 2015, Iraqi forces took control of Highway 1 in September 2016 with the help of Shi'a PMF.

143 Nour Saham, "Iraq's Good Sunni," *Foreign Policy*, November 16, 2016, http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/11/16/iraqs-good-sunni/.

144 There were also allegations that the 51st Brigade allowed ISIL fighters to transit through the areas the brigade controls. One local researcher interviewed said that most locals assume there to be a tacit or secret agreement between the 51st Brigade and the militant group due to the continuous flow of ISIL supporters across government-controlled Shirqat between Hawija and Mosul. Some members of the 51st Brigade are former ISIL fighters who turned against the group, according to local reports and the mayor.

145 According to a local researcher, an estimated 286 individuals belonging to approximately 110 ISIL families were taken to the Shahama camp and 145 of them are from Shirqat. Earlier reporting by Human Rights Watch found that at least 125 families from Salah ad-Din governorate had been forced into the camp. Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Displacement."

146 Ibid.

147 According to local sources who were aware of it, the formal decision was endorsed as a recommendation by the council's security committee for these illegal deportations. Salah ad-Din Provincial Council Decision 3889 (September 6, 2016). The council held its meeting on August 30, 2016, but the decision is dated September 6.

148 For further details on the forced displacement and this particular ruling, see the full case study findings at http://www.gppi.net/publications/iraq-after-isil-shirqat/.

149 Bulos, "Iraqi Forces".

150 International researchers were not given permission to travel to Baiji. Instead field research was carried out solely by Amin al-Qaisi. Frauke Maas and Bahra Saleh contributed secondary research for the initial development of this case study, available at http://www.gppi.net/publications/iraq-after-isil-baiji.

151 The al-Taff Brigade was mainly composed of Shi'a Arabs from southern governorates, but one of its regiments (the al-Takhi Regiment) drew from local Sunni Arabs, the Jibbour tribe.

152 The Sunni Arab Liwa Salah ad-Din has a regiment of between 260 and 300 fighters in Baiji. According to one source, 85 percent of the regiment is composed of fighters from the local Qaysi tribe.

153 Samaha, "Iraq's 'Good Sunni'."

154 "Displacement Tracking Matrix," International Organization for Migration, http://iraqdtm.iom.int/ReturneeML.aspx.

155 For example, Human Rights Watch, indicated in 2016 that League of the Righteous militiamen rounded up thousands of families fleeing from the desert west of Baiji and held them at a food warehouse near Tikrit. "Iraq: Ban Abusive Militias from Mosul Operation. Unpunished Killings, Torture Put Civilians in Harm's Way," *Human Rights Watch,* July 31, 2016, https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/07/31/iraq-ban-abusive-militias-mosul-operation. One local source interviewed for this study claimed that the PMF detained 28 people in Albu Tu'ma village in late 2015. Some 18 months later, their fates were still unknown.

156 Amnesty International documented several incidents of IDPs being interrogated at PMF checkpoints and, based on their perceived ISIL affiliation, subjected to harsh treatment, including cases of torture. Amnesty International, *Iraq: Turning a Blind Eye: The Arming of the Popular Mobilization Units* (London: Amnesty International, 2017), https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde14/5386/2017/en/.

157 This paper builds primarily on key informant interviews conducted in February-March 2017 by the author and two local researchers, Ammar Ahmmed and Mohamed Faiq, in Tuz Khurmatu city, Brawchili town, and Khidr Wali town with political representatives, local security actors, civil society representatives, and people displaced from areas to which the team had no access, including Amerli, Hulaywa, Suleiman Bek, and Yengice.

158 Although PMFs did not formally participate in defending Tuz Khurmatu, local Turkmen PMF forces began establishing checkpoints there in December 2014, shortly after ISIL's ouster. This move created a *de facto* sphere of PMF control within an area that had been exclusively under Kurdish control since the Iraqi army's collapse in June 2014.

159 The role of the Khorasani Brigades in today's Tuz is unclear. Key informants suggested they stayed as a launching pad for an eventual confrontation with Kurds in the Kirkuk area.

160 At the time of research, Turkmen PMFs fell under two brigades: Brigade 16 in Tuz Khurmatu city and Brigade 52 in the Suleiman Bek and Amerli sub-districts as well as the border regions of Tuz, including Diyala and Kirkuk governorates (e.g., Tazah Khurmatu and Basheer towns).

161 For more details, see the full case study report: http://www.gppi.net/publications/iraq-after-isil-tuz.

162 Using satellite imagery and field visits, Human Rights Watch documented widespread destruction of property in 30 out of 35 analyzed Arab and Sunni Turkmen villages in PMF-controlled Tuz. Quoting local officials and community representatives, Human Rights Watch reported that the destruction was "methodical and driven by revenge and intended to alter the demographic composition of Iraq's traditionally diverse provinces." Human Rights Watch, *After Liberation Came Destruction*.

163 "Allawi: The Return of IDPs to Jurf al-Sakhr is in Iran's hands," *Al-Jazeera Arabic*, May 4, 2017.

164 The PUK's Unit 70 was in charge of most Kurdish-controlled areas of Tuz and had its base in Khidr Wali town. However, Kurdish-controlled parts of the capital, Tuz Khurmatu, were ethnically mixed. In Kurdish areas of Tuz Khurmatu, there were two separate *Asayish*: one reporting to the PUK leadership and the other to the KDP.

165 The three villages are Kukis, Khasa Darli, and Yafa. President of the Sunni Waqf in Sammarra, *Report on Suleiman Bek and Amerli*.

166 Amnesty International, "Iraq: Fresh evidence that tens of thousands forced to flee Tuz Khurmatu amid indiscriminate attacks, lootings and arson," October 24, 2017, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/10/iraq-fresh-evidence-that-tens-of-thousands-forced-to-flee-tuz-khurmatu-amid-indiscriminate-attacks-lootings-and-arson/.

167 Ibid.

168 Research was conducted by local researchers from Kirkuk, who wish to remain anonymous due to the sensitivity of the situation in Kirkuk. Interviews were conducted with more than 50 key informants, including political representatives from a range of constituencies, members of local NGOs and universities, students, directly affected IDPs, and those supporting or members of local forces. The majority of interviews were conducted in Kirkuk city with a smaller number conducted in or with those from the other areas discussed.

169 Samuel Morris, Khogir Wirya, and Dlawer Ala'Aldeen, *The Future of Kirkuk. A Roadmap for Resolving the Status of the Governorate* (Erbil: Middle East Research Institute, 2015), http://www.meri-k.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/The-Future-of-Kirkuk-A-Roadmap-for-Resolving-the-Status-of-the-Province-English.pdf.

170 Ibid.

171 Within weeks of the agreement, the Associated Press reported that 2,000 PMF fighters had arrived at the Taza base and militia leaders estimated that a total of 5,000 fighters, some of whom had arrived from outside Kirkuk, were present in the governorate in February 2015. Vivian Salama and Bram Janssen, "Tensions are rising between Kurds and Shia Militias in Iraq," *Business Insider,* February 17, 2015, http://www.businessinsider.com/tensions-are-rising-between-kurds-and-shia-militias-in-iraq-2015-2?IR=T. The total number of PMF later increased as more local Shi'a Turkmen forces were mobilized.

172 For a more detailed description of the joint fighting and security threats around Bashir, see the full case study at http://www.gppi.net/publications/iraq-after-isil-kirkuk.

173 In 2016, Kurdish forces erected an almost contiguous, fortified security barrier along the frontline, which further marked out the Kurdish line of control. The trench is visually depicted in this Arabic Al Jazeera video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a02PzXkfCz4.

174 While these are the broad outlines, there were both overlapping areas of control and mutually contested areas. Although the PUK-Peshmerga had the upper hand in Kirkuk city, both KDP- and PUK-affiliated Asayish forces as well as Kirkuk's local police also retained a prominent role in security.

175 "KRG: Oilfields Takeover Was to Secure Them from Iraqi Sabotage," *Rudaw,* July 11, 2014, http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/110720141; Kurdistan Regional Government, Ministry of Natural Resources, "KRG Statement on Recent Events at Oil Facilities and Infrastructure in Makhmour District," July 11, 2014, http://mnr.krg.org/index.php/en/press-releases/394-krg-statement-on-recent-events-at-oil-facilities-and-infrastructure-in-makhmour-district; Ben van Heuvelen and Ben Lando, "Oil exports steady through July," *Iraq Oil Report,* August 1, 2017, http://www.iraqoilreport.com/news/oil-exports-steady-july-24499/; "Kirkuk Oil Flows in Jeopardy Again as Kurdish Tensions Grow," *Reuters,* March 3, 2017, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-oil-kirkuk-turkey-idUSKBN16A1EF; Kamal Chomani, "Kirkuk's Oil to Play Big Role in Kurdish Independence," *Al Monitor,* June 9, 2017, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/06/kirkuk-iraq-kurdistan-independence-baghdad-oil.html; "Official: Kurds, Baghdad Agree to Keep Kirkuk Crude Flowing to Turkey," *VOA News,* March 8, 2017, https://www.voanews.com/a/kurds-baghdad-oil-turkey/3754988.html.

176 More information about each of these groups is contained in the full case study available at: http://www.gppi.net/publications/iraq-after-isil-kirkuk.

177 In addition to three camps in Tuz district. Dalshad Abdullah, "Six Iranian Military Camps South of Kirkuk... Others on the Way," *Asharq al Awsat,* August 22, 2016, https://eng-archive.aawsat.com/d-abdullah/news-middle-east/six-iranian-military-camps-south-kirkuk-others-way.

178 The Martyr Sadr Regiment is a Shi'a Turkmen force under PMF Brigade 15. It was established by the Kirkuk office of the Islamic Da'wa Party (the largest political party in Iraq and the political source of all prime ministers since 2006). The Haqq Regiment is composed of Sunni Turkmen and was established by Turhan al-Mufti, an advisor to the prime minister on Turkmen affairs and head of the Turkmen Haqq Party.

179 See, for example, Wasfi al-Assi explaining to his fighters that they are part of *al-hashd al-shaabi*, which many accuse of violating the rights of Sunni Arabs. Qasim Jabar, "Sheikh Wasfi al-Asi in Haditha Fighters from the Tribe Slaves Volunteers within the Hashd," YouTube video, 1:51, March 12, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFzIdanwSSE; see also "Hadi al-Ameri's visit to the Sunni *Hashd*: The Hashd Authority Southwest Kirkuk," Facebook post, April 9, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=183108662090223&id=134231490311274.

180 Of the estimated 600 families (3,880 persons) displaced from Bashir, 150 Shi'a Turkmen families have already returned. No Arab IDPs had returned to neighboring villages, despite a directive from the sub-district manager (the local authority) in Taza that they were free to do so.

181 Following an October 2016 attack on Kurdish forces, political officials blamed Arab IDPs in Kirkuk for instigating the attack. In response, at least 250 IDPs from outside Kirkuk were expelled, more than 100 homes in informal settlements in Kirkuk city were razed, and the populations of two Arab villages (comprising at least 150 families) in Dibis were forcibly displaced. Local media also reported that the Kurdish Security Forces completely emptied Qarah Tappah village in Yaychi sub-district. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch reported that hundreds of IDP families were evicted from *Wahed Huzairan* as well as other Arab-majority and mixed-ethnicity neighborhoods of Kirkuk city in a matter of days after the Asayish issued a verbal warning and confiscated identity cards, which would only be returned if the families left Kirkuk. Amnesty International, *'Where Are We Supposed to Go?' Destruction and Forced Displacement in Kirkuk* (London: Amnesty International, 2016), https://www.amnestyusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/kirkuk_briefing.pdf; Human Rights Watch, *KRG: Kurdish Forces Ejecting Arabs in Kirkuk Halt Displacements, Demolitions; Compensate Victims* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2016), https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/11/03/krg-kurdish-forces-ejecting-arabs-kirkuk; Human Rights Watch, *Marked with an "X": Iraqi Kurdish Forces' Destruction of Villages, Homes in Conflict with ISIS* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2016), https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/11/13/marked-x/iraqi-kurdish-forces-destruction-villages-homes-conflict-isis.

182 For a map showing the location of those 60 villages, which for the most part run along the Kurdish security barrier, see "Building Demolitions in Villages, Kirkuk Governorate," *Human Rights Watch,* November 7, 2016, https://www.hrw.org/video-photos/map/2016/11/07/building-demolitions-villages-kirkuk-governorate. See also Human Rights Watch, *Marked with an "X."*

183 Amnesty International, *'Where Are We Supposed to Go?'*

184 For example, on September 22, 2016, 115 families were evicted from the Laylan IDP camp and their homes were destroyed. Several Arab IDP families from Hawija were evicted from Kirkuk city as ISIL strengthened its grip on Hawija district. Evictions were carried out by local authorities, aided by the Asayish. Human Rights Watch, *KRG: Kurdish Forces Ejecting Arabs*. According to some estimates, Sunni Arab and Sunni Turkmen IDPs from outside Kirkuk reportedly comprise the majority of the nearly 374,000 IDPs.

185 For example, an October 2016 attack in Kirkuk city triggered widespread retaliation by the Kurdish Security Forces against Sunni Arabs throughout the governorate. Tim Arango, "ISIS Fighters in Iraq Attack Kirkuk, Diverting Attention from Mosul," *New York Times,* October 21, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/22/world/middleeast/iraq-kirkuk.html.

186 Human Rights Watch, *Marked with an "X."*

187 For further discussion of past demographic shifts in Kirkuk that were forced and politically motivated, see International Crisis Group, *Iraq and the Kurds: The Brewing Battle over Kirkuk.* (Amman/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2006), https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/56-iraq-and-the-kurds-the-brewing-battle-over-kirkuk.pdf; Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk: The Ethnopolitics of Conflict and Compromise* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Middle East Watch, *Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993), https://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1993/iraqanfal/.

188 Campbell Macdiarmid, "Masoud Barzani: Why It's Time for Kurdish Independence," *Foreign Policy,* June 15, 2017, http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/06/15/masoud-barzani-why-its-time-for-kurdish-independence/.

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