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Bombs in Baghdad and northern Iraq kill 40

August 10, 2009

BAGHDAD (Reuters) - Vehicle bombs in Baghdad and northern Iraq have killed 40 people, police said, the latest of several major attacks since U.S. troops withdrew from towns and cities in June.

The violence raises doubts about the readiness of Iraq's security forces, rebuilt from scratch after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, to cope alone, and also bolsters fears of a resurgence of sectarian slaughter between Sunnis and Shi'ites.

Bloodshed has abated in the last 18 months, but before that dozens of bodies were dumped on Baghdad's streets each day and morgues overflowed with victims of the violence.

Two truck bombs killed 30 people and wounded 155 near the northern Iraqi city of Mosul on at dawn August 10, police said.

The truck bombs flattened some 40 homes in the predominantly Shi'ite village of Khazna, 20 kilometers east of Mosul. The village is home to the small Shabka community, a sect of Kurdish origin. People were buried under the rubble.

"What have we done for terrorists to kill innocents in their sleep?" cried Umm Qasim, 35, her face covered in blood. She was traveling in a truck with her wounded son and the bodies of four family members, including her husband and sister.

Bombings and shootings are reported almost daily in and around Mosul, capital of Nineveh Province, where disputes between Arabs and Kurds threaten to split the region and inflame tensions that could threaten Iraq's long-term stability.

Insurgents have been able to hide in the remote, mountainous areas around Mosul.

Last week, a string of bombings targeting Shi'ite Muslims in Baghdad and northern Iraq killed 44

people. Sunni Islamist militants such as al Qaeda, who consider Shi'ites heretics, are often blamed.

Untested Iraqi Forces

In Baghdad, a car bomb and a roadside bomb targeting laborers queuing for work killed seven people in predominantly Shi'ite areas in the southwest of the capital, a source at the hospital close to the blasts said.

Police had earlier given a death toll of 16.

In separate attacks in Baghdad, a series of roadside bombs and a bomb stuck to a bus killed three people and wounded 31.

"People are coming here just to make a living. What are they guilty of? Is this their (the bombers') politics?" a bystander at one of the Baghdad blasts said, declining to give his name.

While violence has fallen sharply in the past 18 months - the number of civilians killed in July fell to 224 from 373 a month earlier - insurgents still manage to launch attacks in the face of largely untested Iraqi forces, who lack equipment and experience.

U.S. forces are due to leave Iraq by 2012 in accordance with a bilateral security pact between Washington and Baghdad.

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates said in a visit to Iraq last month there was some chance of a "modest acceleration" of a U.S. troop withdrawal if security improves.

National elections in January will be a key test for Iraq's fledgling democracy and its security forces.

Politicians are in the midst of discussing coalitions ahead of the poll and violence on Sunni or Shi'ite targets may make alliances difficult.

[Link to original story on RFE/RL website](#)

Topics: Security situation, Terrorism,

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