

COI Focus

IRAQ

Security Situation in Central and Southern Iraq

20 March 2020 (update)

Cedoca

Original language: Dutch

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TO A MORE INTEGRATED MIGRATION POLICY, THANKS TO AMIF

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List of abbreviations used

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data
AP	Associated Press
AQI	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CJTF-OIR	Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve
CRS	Congressional Research Service
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
EPIC	Education for Peace in Iraq Center
ERW	Explosive Remains of War
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IBC	Iraq Body Count
IHCHR	Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IHF	Iraqi Humanitarian Fund
iMMAP	Information Management and Mine Action Programs
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
ISW	Institute for the Study of War
KRG	Kurdish Regional Government
KRI	Kurdish Region of Iraq
KDP	Kurdish Democratic Party
NYT	New York Times
PMF	Popular Mobilization Forces (= PMU)
PMU	Popular Mobilization Units (= PMF)
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê, Kurdistan Workers' Party
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SVBIED	Suicide Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USDOS	United States Department of State
VBIED	Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device
YBS	Yekîneyên Berxwedana Şengal (Sinjar Resistance Units)

Introduction

The aim of this COI Focus is to examine the security situation in Central and Southern Iraq, including the capital Baghdad. The area comprises the provinces of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah al-Din (Central Iraq), the capital province of Baghdad and the provinces of Southern Iraq: Babil, Basra, Karbala, Maysan, al-Muthanna, Najaf, Qadisiya, Dhi Qar and Wasit. Research focused in particular on the period from March 2019 to January 2020. In some cases, such as statistics on attacks, the data for the whole year 2019 and the month of January 2020 were analysed in order to compare different sources.

This COI Focus is a partial update of the EASO report on the security situation in Iraq: *EASO Country of Origin Report Iraq, Security Situation, March 2019*.¹ Regarding the history of the conflict up to February 2019, the text refers to the corresponding chapters in that report. The developments in the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI) are not covered in this document, these are covered in the COI Focus *De Veiligheidssituatie in de Koerdische Autonome Regio [The security situation in the Kurdish Autonomous Region]* of Cedoca of 20 November 2019.²

Following a description of the current state of the conflict, the typology of violence, targets, geographical distribution and population movements resulting from the conflict are examined.

This COI Focus does not contain an exhaustive overview of the security incidents. Those mentioned primarily serve to illustrate the general trends in Central and Southern Iraq. The geographical distribution of violence is covered in separate chapters for the provinces of Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah al-Din, while the Southern provinces of Babil, Basra, Maysan, al-Muthanna, Qadisiya, Thi-Qar and Wasit are covered together in one chapter.

Cedoca adopted the most common spellings for place and personal names, names of armed groups and political parties, as used in the consulted English-language sources.

As regards Islamic State in Iraq, the branch of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) that has sought expansion in the wider region (the Levant) and has been operating as ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) since April 2013³, the abbreviation ISIS is used throughout this document. In 2014, ISIS split from al-Qaeda. Since 29 June 2014, it has called itself Islamic State (IS).⁴ Another name commonly used by Arab sources is 'Daesh', the acronym for the Arabic name of ISIS: "الدولة الإسلامية الدولة" and "al-dawla al-islamiyya fii-il-i'raq wa-ash-shaam".⁵

Only public sources were used for this document, including the UN Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), the NGOs Education for Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC), Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International (AI), Iraq Body Count, the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq, the International Crisis Group (ICG), the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the blog Musings on Iraq, iMMAP, Iraqi News and the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights. International media were also consulted (e.g. Reuters, Al-Jazeera, Al-Monitor, The Guardian, Agence France Presse, Radio Free Europe, New York Times, etc.).

This COI Focus uses data relating to security incidents from the database of the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), a US non-profit project that collects, analyses and maps conflict information. Experienced researchers collect the data using information from a wide range of local, regional and international news sources and organisations.

¹ EASO, 13/03/2019, [url](#)

² Cedoca, 20/11/2020, [url](#)

³ AIVD, 06/2014, [url](#)

⁴ The Independent, 30/06/2014, [url](#)

⁵ WVTF Radio, 16/11/2015, [url](#)

For Iraq, these are:

- Aid Worker Security Database
- Airwars
- Aksam
- Al Ahad TV
- Al Ghad Press
- AP
- Al Maloomah
- Al Masalah
- Al Mirbad
- Al Nabaa
- Al Sumaria TV
- Anadolu Agency
- Sotaliraq
- Iraq News Gazette
- Arab News
- Baghdad Today
- BBC News
- Liveuamap
- Twitter
- Musings on Iraq
- Rudaw
- TamTam
- Telegram
- Xinhua
- Al Iraqiya TV
- Al Jazeera
- Basnews
- Amaq
- Shafaaq News
- Intellinews
- Al Mawqif
- Al Mada
- NRT News
- NPR
- Yaqein
- Al Rafidain Tv
- National Iraqi News Agency
- All Iraq News Agency
- Cumhuriyet
- Sozcu
- Haber 7
- People's Defense Forces
- Takvim
- Yeni Safak
- ROJ News
- Sky News
- ANF News
- Kurdistan24
- Asharq AlAwsat
- Aydinlik
- Hurriyet Daily
- Ayn Al Iraq News
- Baghdad Post
- Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
- Beyaz Gazete
- Daily Sabah
- Facebook
- FARS News Agency (Iran)
- Front Line Defenders
- New Arab
- Gali Kurdistan TV
- Karar
- Haberturk
- HRW
- Human Rights Foundation of Turkey
- Ihlas News Agency
- Independent (United Kingdom)
- Al Arabiya
- Iraqi News
- Kurdish News Network
- Kuwait News Agency
- Nashir
- Reuters
- Saudi Press Agency
- Shar Press
- Spee Media
- VOA
- Watan (Iraq)
- Yemen News Agency SABA

The database is publicly available on the website of ACLED and is continuously supplemented and updated whenever new information comes to light (including for incidents already entered).⁶ The figures from ACLED used by Cedoca in this COI Focus were requested on 1 February 2020. The ACLED inventory shows the type of violence, the perpetrators of the violence, a description of the incidents, the location and the number of fatalities.⁷ ACLED points out that the collected data reflect to a certain extent the priorities of the reporting media and organisations, and that it is possible that the violence is underestimated.⁸

In its Codebook, ACLED explains in detail the methodology applied for the uploading and continuous monitoring of the data. In view of the the above, Cedoca is of the opinion that ACLED's figures can only be considered as an estimate and indication of trends in violence over a given period of time.

Cedoca continually monitors the security conditions in Iraq. Should fundamental changes or developments occur that significantly change the situation on the ground, Cedoca will update this COI Focus as rapidly as possible.

⁶ ACLED, Coding review Process, 10/04/2019, [url](#)

⁷ ACLED, ACLED Codebook, 10/04/2019, [url](#)

⁸ ACLED, ACLED User Guide for Media, 10/04/2019, [url](#)

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1. Brief history

See chapters *1.1 Overview of recent conflicts in Iraq* and *1.2 Political situation in 2018* of the EASO Country of Origin Report Iraq, Security Situation, March 2019.⁹

⁹ EASO, 13/03/2019, p. 13-23, [url](#)

2. Current state of the conflict

According to the Rule of Law in Armed Conflict Project (RULAC), Iraq continued to face multiple, overlapping, non-international armed conflicts in 2019.¹⁰ The United Nations declared that Iraq was in a non-international armed conflict as of January 2014.¹¹ According to RULAC, the Iraqi government was in a protracted, non-international conflict with Islamic State (IS, ISIS, Daesh) and associated groups. The Iraqi government and its armed forces are supported by various armed actors: the armed forces of the Kurdish Autonomous Region (peshmerga), a series of paramilitary militias called Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF, also called Popular Mobilization Units, PMU), other armed militias, and an international coalition led by the United States of America.¹²

According to RULAC, Iraq is also involved in international armed conflict with Turkey¹³, because the country is affected by an internal Turkish conflict between the Turkish government and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which extends into northern Iraq. In July 2015, Turkey launched air strikes on PKK targets in northern Iraq.¹⁴ RULAC judged that the use of force by Turkey on Iraqi territory without the consent of the Iraqi government constitutes international armed conflict.¹⁵

The period from March 2019 is characterised by increasing domestic and international tensions: following the difficult process of forming a government after the 2018 elections¹⁶, the government came under increasing pressure due to scandals surrounding corrupt politicians, such as in Ninewa¹⁷, but also from the increased dissatisfaction of the Shia population in Baghdad and Southern Iraq.¹⁸ The influence of the Shia militias, which had grown through the 2018 elections, was reflected in growing claims to key political functions and the associated financial and employment benefits.¹⁹ The system of the *Muhasasa* - the allocation of posts according to ethno-sectarian quota - has ensured a balance of power in Iraq since 2003, but the endemic corruption associated with this system mainly deprives of economic opportunities the less well-off Iraqis with no family or tribal members who can provide them with employment.²⁰ From 2015 onwards, this difficult economic situation triggered regular waves of demonstrations which led to riots in Southern Iraq in 2018, with the offices of Shia militias and also the Iranian consulate of Basra being attacked.²¹ These demonstrations were brutally repressed by the authorities and the pro-Iranian Shia militia²², and initially the summer of 2019 was less violent during protests than that of 2018. However, following the resignation of the Commander of the Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) Lieutenant General Abdulwahab al-Saadi, a respected figure and well-known outside the security apparatus²³, a new wave of protests soon escalated in Baghdad and most southern cities from 1 October 2019. The first wave of protests lasted until 9 October 2019, and claimed the lives of more than a hundred demonstrators, while thousands more were injured in the violent clashes between the demonstrators and the security forces. In addition to the police, the army was deployed and the demonstrators were also shot at by snipers. The identity of the snipers is not known with

¹⁰ RULAC, 15/02/2018, [url](#); RULAC is an online portal that identifies and classifies situations of armed conflict based on independent assessments, using open source information; it is based on the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, undated, [url](#)

¹¹ UNAMI/OHCHR, 18/07/2014, [url](#), Summary

¹² RULAC, 15/02/2018, [url](#)

¹³ RULAC, 15/02/2018, [url](#)

¹⁴ RULAC, 15/02/2018, [url](#); RULAC, 29/01/2018, [url](#)

¹⁵ RULAC, 15/02/2018, [url](#)

¹⁶ U.N. IRAQ, 30/05/2018, [url](#)

¹⁷ The Guardian, 05/12/2019, [url](#)

¹⁸ Middle East Institute, 21/05/2019, [url](#); International Crisis Group, 05/03/2019, [url](#)

¹⁹ Middle East Institute, 21/05/2019, [url](#)

²⁰ Al-Jazeera, 04/12/2019, [url](#); SEPAD, 26/11/2019, [url](#)

²¹ Reuters, 07/09/2019, [url](#)

²² Musings in Iraq, 20/02/2019, [url](#)

²³ Jerusalem Post, 29/07/2019, [url](#), BBC News, 07/10/2019, [url](#)

certainty, but it is generally assumed that they are members of pro-Iranian Shia militias.²⁴ According to Michael Knights of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the coordination of the snipers was the work of Abu Zainab al-Lami, head of the Central Security Directorate (CSD) of the PMF and a member of the pro-Iranian Shia militia Kata'ib Hezbollah.²⁵

The demonstrators and the authorities agreed to call off the demonstrations between 9 and 25 October 2019 for the annual Arba'een pilgrimage, during which millions of Shia pilgrims travel to the city of Karbala in Southern Iraq to commemorate the end of the period of mourning for Imam Hussein.²⁶

At the end of the pilgrimage, the demonstrations resumed and violent confrontations again took place: the security forces used tear gas and water cannons but also fired with live rounds. The demonstrations took place in Baghdad, especially in and around Tahrir Square, and in all the larger cities in Southern Iraq, with flashpoints at Karbala, Najaf, Nasiriya and Basra. The demonstrators demanded firstly that the ruling political class (and also the government) resigned, and secondly that foreign interference in Iraqi politics - particularly by Iran, but also by the United States - be put to an end.²⁷

Attempts by the authorities to end the demonstrations through the use of force have so far been unsuccessful, and the protests have continued after numerous violent interventions by police, army and pro-Iranian militias.²⁸ Nor have the attempts to weaken the movement by targeted arrests of activists had the effect the authorities hoped for. On the contrary, many demonstrators continue to camp in the squares and buildings they occupy. They prefer the relative safety of groups at these sites to returning home, where they are at risk of being abducted.²⁹

During the storming of the Iranian consulate in Karbala by the demonstrators on 28 November 2019, many people were killed and others were injured.³⁰ Following other serious violent incidents in Nasiriya and other cities in Southern Iraq, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani made a statement expressing poor confidence in the government.³¹ As a result, Prime Minister Abdel Mahdi resigned at the beginning of December.³² It was not until 1 February 2020 that Iraqi President Barham Salih appointed a new candidate for the post of Prime Minister: Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi. However, Allawi was rejected by the protest movement.³³

The Sunni areas of Central Iraq took little part in the demonstrations against the authorities. Apart from expressing support for the demonstrators, they did not take part in any activities. Fear of being associated with ISIS in a demonstration, and therefore of being accused of terrorism, clearly weighs on them.³⁴

Apart from demonstrations, there were also escalating tensions between Iran and the US, which have several army bases on Iraqi territory. On 27 December 2019, a US national was killed in a rocket attack by a pro-Iranian militia on a US army base in Kirkuk.³⁵ Two days later, the US retaliated with air strikes on bases of Kata'ib Hezbollah, killing around 25 people and causing significant material damage.³⁶ On December 31, members of a pro-Iranian militia attacked the U.S. embassy in the

²⁴ UNAMI, 22/10/2019, [url](#)

²⁵ The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 22/10/2019, [url](#)

²⁶ Musings on Iraq, 14/10/2019, [url](#)

²⁷ UNAMI, 05/11/2019, [url](#); UNAMI, 11/12/2019, [url](#); Reuters, 14/11/2019, [url](#); The New Arab, 13/11/2019, [url](#)

²⁸ Reuters, 27/01/2020, [url](#); HRW, 31/01/2020, [url](#); Reuters, 29/11/2019, [url](#)

²⁹ The Washington Post, 11/11/2019, [url](#)

³⁰ AI, 29/10/2019, [url](#)

³¹ The New Arab, 29/11/2019, [url](#)

³² The New Arab, 03/12/2019, [url](#)

³³ MEMO, 02/02/2020, [url](#)

³⁴ Al-Monitor, 15/10/2019, [url](#); Musings on Iraq, 29/10/2019, [url](#)

³⁵ Musings on Iraq, 30/12/2019, [url](#)

³⁶ Musings on Iraq, 30/12/2019, [url](#)

international zone in Baghdad, and set fire to the entrance compound. There were no casualties, only material damage.³⁷

On 3 January 2020, the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, Qassem Soleimani, and the deputy head of the Hashd al-Sha'abi, (Popular Mobilization Forces, PMF), Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, were killed. Muhandis' real name was Jamal Ja'far Muhammad Ali Al Ibrahim, and he was also head of the pro-Iranian militia Kata'ib Hezbollah. Muhandis was widely regarded as one of the most influential political figures in Iraq, and was known as an open advocate of Iranian interests in Iraq.³⁸ Along with six other persons, the two men were killed by a rocket fired by an American drone.³⁹ The deliberate execution of these two key figures of Iranian policy in Iraq had immediate consequences:

- The pro-Iranian movement in Iraqi politics suddenly found itself without leadership: the policy of the pro-Iranian Shia politicians was largely drafted by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard under the leadership of Soleimani, and Muhandis was simultaneously the intermediary and the implementer of Iranian policies. The execution of both men was also a warning to other leaders of similarly oriented militias.⁴⁰
- Iran responded with a rocket attack on US army bases on Iraqi soil (for the first time openly and from Iranian territory) as a one-off revenge response for Soleimani's death.⁴¹
- The pro-Iranian Shia militias in Iraq stated that this did not avenge Muhandis' death and carried out several rocket attacks on military targets of the US and the international coalition.⁴²
- Soleimani and Muhandis were seen by the anti-government demonstrators as two of the main people responsible for the attempts to crush the protests by force. The demonstrators had not concealed their aversion to these two men, and frequently demanded their resignation. Following their deaths, the demonstrators were accused by pro-Iranian militias of being jointly responsible for their assassinations, and portrayed by these militias as a US-led conspiracy against the legitimate government.⁴³ The demonstrators responded by speaking out against both Iranian and American interference in Iraq.⁴⁴
- The Iraqi parliament voted a motion demanding that all foreign troops leave Iraq.⁴⁵ The resigning government, through the outgoing Prime Minister, repeated this demand but has not yet taken any concrete executive measures.⁴⁶ The government of the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI) has spoken out against the departure of the US military⁴⁷ and, according to the US, they have resumed joint operations with the Iraqi army against ISIS following a brief hiatus.⁴⁸

The activities of ISIS in 2019 remained at a similar level to the previous year. In particular, the terrorist organisation tried to establish a foothold in sparsely populated, inaccessible areas and areas which were not under the full control of the security forces,⁴⁹ notably in the following eleven zones identified by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) in June 2019⁵⁰:

³⁷ Al-Monitor, 02/01/2020, [url](#)

³⁸ Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 05/01/2020, [url](#) ; Musings on Iraq, 04/01/2020, [url](#)

³⁹ The Guardian, 05/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁰ The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 05/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴¹ Musings on Iraq, 08/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴² Musings on Iraq, 15/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴³ The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 06/01/2020, [url](#); Musings on Iraq, 09/01/2020, [url](#); Al-Monitor, 06/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁴ Al-Monitor, 11/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁵ Reuters, 05/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁶ Memo, 11/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁷ Asharq Al-Awsat, 18/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁸ Musings on Iraq, 17/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁹ ICG, 11/10/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁰ ISW, 30/06/2019, pp. 19-21, [url](#)

- The Badush Mountains northwest of Mosul.
- Tal Kayf: According to the ISW, the Tal Kayf IDP camp (north of Mosul) holds at least 1,400 foreign spouses of ISIS fighters and their children, making the camp an ISIS "support zone".
- The Tigris Valley (south of Mosul), from Hammam al-Alil over Qayara and Shirqat to Tikrit and Al-Daur. Many civilians from Mosul, Tal Afar and Hawija are in IDP camps in this area and a number of captured ISIS fighters are trapped in this region. ISW assumes that ISIS has infiltrated the camps.
- The Makhmour Mountains southeast of Mosul are ideal terrain for ISIS, due to the numerous caves and tunnel systems where it is easy to hide weapons and other supplies. This mountain range also falls between the spheres of influence of the ISF and the peshmerga. According to the ISW, they are a base for actions towards KRI, Qayara and Hammam al-Alil but also along the Tigris to Salah al-Din.
- The Zaab Triangle includes Hawija, Shirqat and the northern part of Salah al-Din. This zone extends into the Makhoul Mountains, and the Jazeera Desert.
- The Jazeera Desert is located in Ninewa and forms the entire southwestern part of the province up to the border with Syria and Anbar province. ISIS uses this area as a relatively safe haven for themselves and for incursions into and from Syria.
- The Anbar Desert joins the Jazeera Desert. This vast area serves as a refuge for ISIS and allows the organisation to access the surrounding inhabited areas from there.
- The Hamrin Mountains are the most southwesterly offshoot of the Zagros Mountains. This area is favourable terrain for ISIS and forms the connection between Salah al-Din, Diyala and Kirkuk. ISIS benefits from an extended tunnel system to hide weapons and supplies. The area also serves as a base for attacks in the Tuz Khurmatu area.
- Diyala River Valley: the province of Diyala had apparently been liberated from ISIS by the ISF and the PMF in January 2015, but the group maintained networks in the valley and managed to resume active guerrilla operations with the dense vegetation as protection.
- The northern Baghdad Belts are located in the districts of Tarmiyah and Taji and according to ISW this zone has never been completely ISIS-free. According to ISW, it also serves as a connection between Anbar and Diyala.
- Within Iraq, the Zagros Mountains run from the northeast of Diyala to the KRI. According to ISW, ISIS support zones in the KRI, to where some ISIS militants are said to have withdrawn from Northern Iraq.⁵¹

The modus operandi of ISIS is the same as in 2018: targeted executions of people working for or with the government⁵², ambushes against ISF and PMF⁵³ and extortion of the rural population to obtain funds and food.⁵⁴ In the context of extortion, the burning of crop fields shortly before harvest is also noteworthy. In this way, farmers who refuse to cooperate with the organisation are punished.⁵⁵ ISIS also takes advantage of the fact that the army and PMF mainly operate during the day and withdraw to their fortified positions at night. During the night, the militants of the terrorist organisation have much more freedom of movement.⁵⁶ This freedom is relative because larger concentrations of fighters and vehicles are now noticed more quickly. The ISF and the international coalition learned the lesson of 2014, when ISIS managed to bring together larger numbers of fighters in sparsely populated terrain for large-scale attacks. Even remote areas are now intensely scrutinized from the air or from space.⁵⁷

⁵¹ ISW, 30/06/2019, pp. 19-21, [url](#)

⁵² ISW, 30/06/2019, p.28, [url](#)

⁵³ Al-Monitor, 21/12/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁴ AP News, 13/05/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁵ Rudaw, 14/05/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁶ AP News, 13/05/2019, [url](#); Los Angeles Times, 07/10/2019, [url](#); Musings on Iraq, 19/08/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁷ Musings on Iraq, 19/08/2019, [url](#)

Roadside bombs as assault weapons and other IEDs (including the occasional bomb vehicle) are still used in densely populated areas, but the intensive urban terror campaigns – as from 2012 to 2016, with dozens of VBIEDs and SVBIEDs - have not returned anywhere.⁵⁸ Suicide attacks have become very exceptional. It can be assumed that ISIS now has limited appeal to new recruits and few new members are joining. Existing fighters for the organisation currently have no choice but to keep fighting. The only alternative for them is life imprisonment and in most cases even the death penalty.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Musings on Iraq, 19/08/2019, [url](#) ; ISW, 30/06/2019, [url](#) ; ICG, 11/10/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁹ ICG, 11/10/2019, [url](#)

3. Warring factions

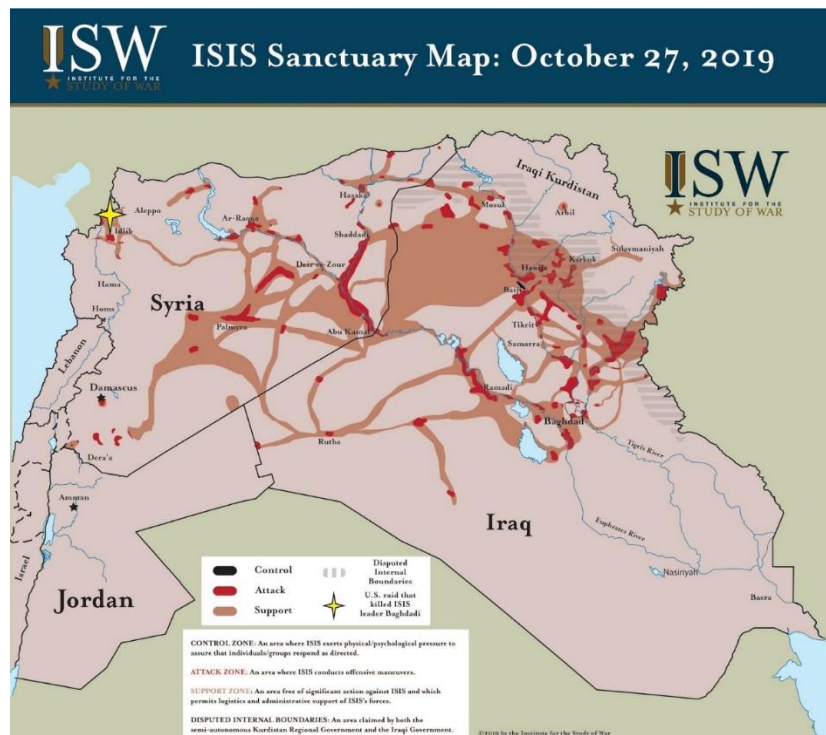
See chapter 1.3 *Armed Actors* of the EASO Country of Origin Report Iraq, Security Situation, March 2019.⁶⁰

4. Typology of violence

This chapter is linked to chapter 1.4 *Recent security trends and armed confrontations in 2018* of the EASO report.⁶¹ The recent security trends and armed clashes from March 2019 are illustrated below, but only as regards the territory under central government control, and excluding the KRI.

4.1. ISIS

The areas where ISIS is able to carry out attacks in Iraq are described by the Institute for the Study of War as "Attack Zones". The most recent analysis of ISIS' field of action in Iraq dates back to 27 October 2019. These zones have been considerably extended compared to December 2018 (the map included in the EASO report), in the Euphrates Valley between Ramadi and Haditha, in the disputed territories between Kirkuk, Hawija, Baiji and Tikrit. In the northwest of Ninewa, zones have been added where ISIS has carried out attacks on the ISF, the PMF and also on civilians.



ISIS Sanctuary Map: October 27, 2019⁶²

⁶⁰ EASO, 13/03/2019, pp. 23-31, [url](#)

⁶¹ EASO, 13/03/2019, pp. 31-44, [url](#)

⁶² ISW, 08/11/2019, [url](#)

In June 2019, ISW identified eleven areas within Iraq that serve as zones of refuge, re-supply and operational bases (see above, Chapter 2. Current state of the conflict).⁶³

The findings and analyses of the EASO report on the security situation are still fully applicable: both the geographical regions in which the organisation operates and its modus operandi as well as the strategy of its opponents (ISF, PMF and international coalition) have not changed.

There is no agreement between authoritative sources on the current operational capabilities of ISIS. According to ISW, there is consensus within the US intelligence services that ISIS is trying to regroup, but disagreement remains about the strength of the organisation in particular. Also according to ISW, the US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) estimated in July 2018 that ISIS probably still had 30,000 fighters combined in Iraq and Syria, while the Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR, also from the US) only estimated about 1,000 fighters in December 2017.⁶⁴

The most recent report by the US Inspector General for overseas military operations outlines the situation regarding ISIS for the period from 1 July to 25 October 2019, including the differences in interpretation between the various intelligence services. These agree that during the quarter studied, ISIS managed to fortify and extend its command and control structure in Iraq, and that ISIS continues to regroup in desert and mountain areas where there is little or no presence of the security forces.⁶⁵

An earlier report by the same Inspector General for overseas military operations highlighted the fact that tensions between the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) and Baghdad have led to security gaps in the disputed territories, and that ISIS has been able to exploit this to regroup and organise attacks in the region.⁶⁶

4.2. PMF

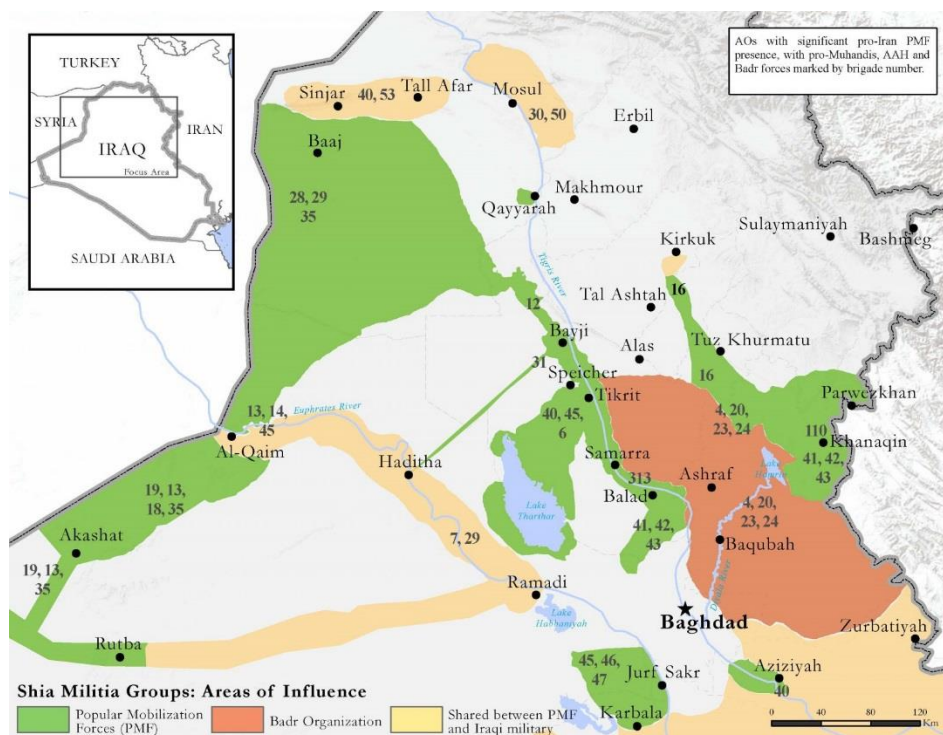
The spheres of influence of the pro-Iranian militias (the majority of the PMF) in the former ISIS territory were illustrated as follows by Michael Knights in the journal *CTC Sentinel* in August 2019:

⁶³ ISW, 30/06/2019, pp. 19-21, [url](#)

⁶⁴ ISW, 30/06/2019, pp. 19-21, [url](#)

⁶⁵ Lead Inspector General, 25/11/2019, pp. 46-48, [url](#)

⁶⁶ Lead Inspector General, 09/08/2019, p. 44, [url](#)



Main areas of operation for Iran-backed militias in Iraq, annotated with PMF brigade numbers⁶⁷

The numbers of the PMF brigades belong to the following militias⁶⁸:

- 45, 56, 57: Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH), around 7,500 fighters in Iraq (and 2,500 in Syria).
- 41, 42, 43: Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), around 10,000 fighters.
- 40: Kata'ib Al-Imam Ali, 8,000 men.
- 6: Kata'ib Jund al-Imam, around 5,000 registered fighters.
- 14: Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, 3,000 men.
- 18: Saraya Talia al-Khurasani, 3,000 men.
- 12: Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, 1,500 men.

Smaller brigades, under the influence of Kata'ib Hezbollah:

- 39: Harakat al-Abdal.
- 17: Saraya al-Jihad.
- 13: Liwa al-Tafuf.
- 7: Liwa al-Muntadher.
- 19: Ansar Allah al-Tawfiya.
- 28: Saraya Ansar al-Aqeeda.
- 29: Kata'ib Ansar al-Hujja.
- 25: Quwwat al-Shahid al-Sadr al-Awwal.
- 35: Quwwat al-Shahid al-Sadr.
- 31: Kata'ib al-Tayyar al-Risali.
- 53: Liwa al-Hussein (Shia Turkmen).
- 36: Lalish (Yezidi).

⁶⁷CTC, 13/08/2019, [url](#)

⁶⁸ CTC, 13/08/2019, [url](#) (all brigades)

- 30: Liwa al-Shabak/Quwat Sahl Nineveh (Shabak), according to Michael Knights also associated with Badr.
- 50: Babiliyun (Christians), according to Michael Knights also associated with Badr.

Brigades of or under the influence of Badr:

- 4, 9, 10, 20, 23, 24: Badr (led by Hadi al-Ameri).
- 16: Quwwat al-Turkmen (Turkmen, based in Tuz and Kirkuk), this brigade is organisationally linked to Badr, but according to Michael Knights it leans on KH.⁶⁹
- 110: Fayli-Kurdish, Shia.

4.3. Other conflicts

Besides the conflict with the remnants of Islamic State, the following conflicts are ongoing:

- The central state against the KRG regarding the control of the disputed territories.⁷⁰
- Part of the Shia population in Baghdad and Southern Iraq protests against the government, politicians and Iran who are seen as responsible for the dire economic situation in the country (see above chapter 2. Current state of the conflict).
- Between Turkey and the PKK in the district of Sinjar. Turkey carried out air strikes in Sinjar during the period studied (see chapter 6.5. Ninewa).
- Between different ethnic groups in Central Iraq, especially in the provinces of Ninewa, Salah al-Din, Kirkuk and Diyala: Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Shabak, Kaka'i, Christians and Yezidi. These local conflicts fall within the conflicts between the larger players. The armed militias of minorities and local tribes are almost always associated with either the pro-Iranian militias, the "neutral" PMF, or the peshmerga (see infra, chapter 6. Geographical distribution).

One of the consequences of the escalation of tensions between the US and Iran (and, by extension, Iraq) is the reduction and temporary suspension of cooperation projects between the Iraqi army and the coalition forces. Several countries participating in the coalition have scaled back their activities. There is a danger that ISIS may take advantage of these gaps. The US announced on 17 January 2020 that it had resumed joint actions with the ISF but the Iraqi government contradicted this.⁷¹ On 14 February 2020, the Iraqi government and NATO agreed in principle to further develop the training programme between NATO and Iraq.⁷² Another political protagonist in Iraq, Moqtada al-Sadr, has spoken out against the US military presence. He called on his supporters to protest against it on 24 January 2020.⁷³

These conflicts led to the following forms of violence in 2019 and early 2020:

4.4. Explosives (IED, VBIED, SVBIED, SVEST)

The NGO Education for Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC) monitors and maps these attacks on a weekly basis. A compilation of these data for the period from 28 February 2019 to 16 January 2020 shows the distribution of these attacks across the territory:

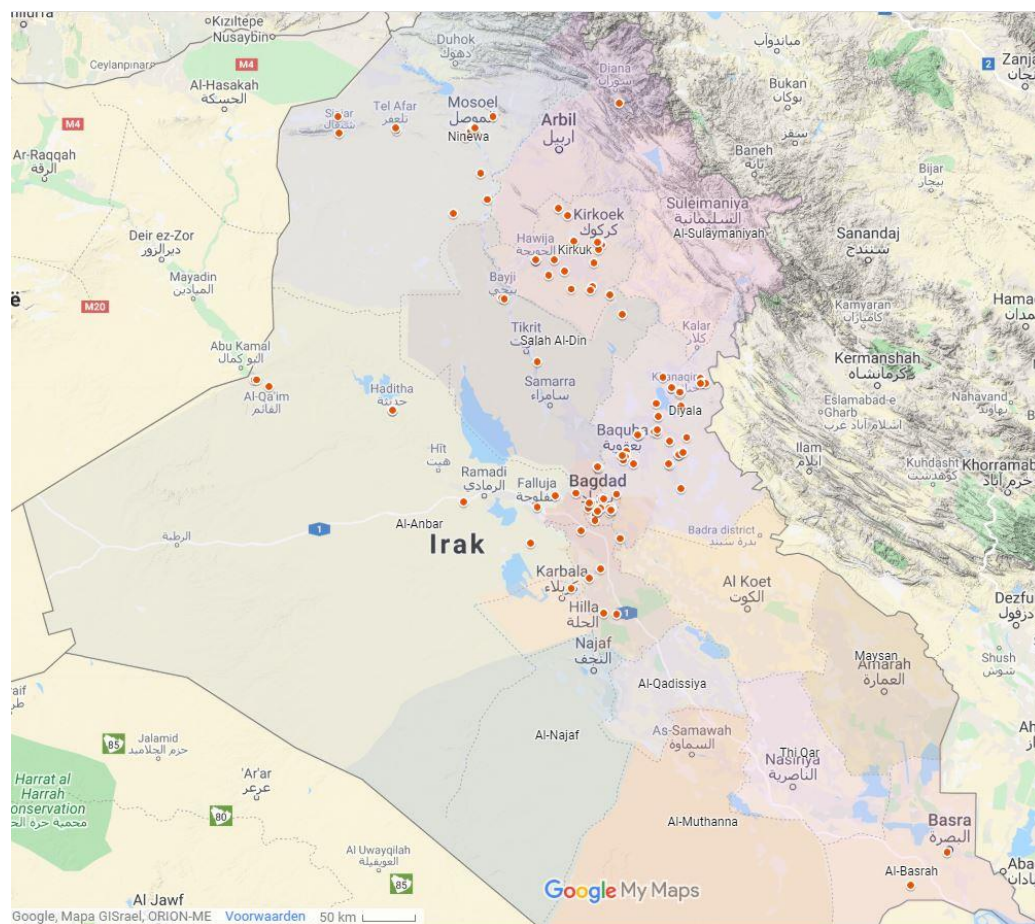
⁶⁹ CTC, 13/08/2019, [url](#)

⁷⁰ Lead Inspector General, 25/11/2019, p. 44, [url](#)

⁷¹ Musings on Iraq, 17/01/2020, [url](#)

⁷² NATO, 14/02/2020, [url](#)

⁷³ CNBC 24/01/2020, [url](#); BBC News, 24/01/2020, [url](#)



EPIC, attacks with explosives, ISHM #197 to ISHM #237, 28/02/2019-16/01/2020⁷⁴

This map only shows a trend within the indicated time period. The list of attacks by EPIC is not exhaustive.

Another source that provides data on violent incidents in Iraq is ACLED. When placed on a map of Iraq, all ISIS attacks falling into the explosion/remote violence category (attacks with explosives, missiles or other shelling) between 1 January 2019 and 31 January 2020 show a similar pattern:

⁷⁴ EPIC, compilation by Cedoca on Google Maps, 22/01/2020, [url](#)



ACLED, Explosions/remote violence, Actor: ISIS, 01/01/2019-31/01/2020⁷⁵

Not all attacks with explosives are the work of ISIS, but the vast majority are. Clear trends can be identified: most attacks occurred in the provinces of Diyala, Kirkuk and Baghdad and to a slightly lesser extent in the provinces of Salah al-Din, Anbar and Ninewa. In Diyala, ISIS did not control any areas for long periods of time during the conflict, the organisation went back underground sooner than in other disputed provinces, and the structure for a guerrilla campaign were rebuilt earlier.⁷⁶ In Kirkuk, ISIS exploited a power vacuum following the forced retreat of the peshmerga in October 2017.⁷⁷

4.5. Other forms of violence used by ISIS

Besides explosives, ISIS is also involved in the murder of authority figures: for example, the *mukhtar* of a village or the local chief of police. These targeted attacks against people representing the public

⁷⁵ ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#); compilation by Cedoca on Google Maps, 01/02/2020, [url](#)

⁷⁶ CTC, 25/10/2016, [url](#)

⁷⁷ Niqash, 10/04/2018, [url](#)

authorities primarily occur in rural areas where the security forces fail to keep their territory permanently under full control.⁷⁸

Units of the army, police or PMF are regularly attacked by ISIS fighters. These attacks take place at checkpoints or on connecting roads where security patrols pass. These attacks are also more frequent in rural areas. In the larger cities, ISIS is less strong due to the lack of local support.⁷⁹

The frequency of attacks by ISIS is difficult to ascertain. EPIC counted 123 attacks with explosives across Iraq for the period from 28 March 2019 to 16 January 2020, but this list includes attacks by actors other than ISIS and does not include other forms of ISIS violence such as the above-mentioned assassinations of officials.⁸⁰ Other sources also show differences in the number of attacks by ISIS. For example, the Inspector General of overseas military operations in Iraq, in his most recent report on Iraq, mentioned 154 mainly small-scale attacks by ISIS in the third quarter of 2019. This figure - taken from the Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR, the Supreme Command of this military operation) - is contradicted by the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), which claims that the data is incomplete.⁸¹ The frequency of violence and the number of victims are discussed in the next chapter 5. *Targets of the violence*.

4.6. Air strikes

Both the Air Force of Iraq and the International Coalition carry out air strikes on ISIS positions. The Turkish Air Force is also active in Iraq. In the course of 2019 and in January 2020, it carried out attacks on the positions of the PKK-affiliated Yekîneyên Berxwedana Şengal (Sinjar Resistance Units, YBS).⁸²

On 3 January 2020, the US carried out a drone attack on Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis at Baghdad airport (see below). The US also carried out air raids on the pro-Iranian militia Kata'ib Hezbollah.⁸³

There were also some cases of explosions at military facilities of pro-Iranian militias as from 19 July 2019 that were attributed to air strikes by unknown actors. These happened before the start of the escalation between Iran and the US. There is a strong suspicion that Israel was behind these drone attacks. This was suggested by the Inspector General for overseas operations of the US Army in a report to Congress.⁸⁴

4.7. Missile attacks

Missile attacks were carried out by different warring factions. Iran launched missiles from its own territory on US bases in Iraq.⁸⁵ The pro-Iranian PMF also fired missiles at US military facilities. According to Michael Knights, from January to May 2019, twelve rocket attacks alone were launched by pro-Iranian militias on US military and commercial targets.⁸⁶ This continued later in the year, with an escalation after 27 December 2019. Following the drone attack on Soleimani and Muhandis, pro-Iranian militias regularly fired rockets at American targets in Iraq.⁸⁷

⁷⁸ ICG, 11/10/2019, [url](#)

⁷⁹ ICG, 11/10/2019, [url](#); Musings on Iraq, 19/08/2019, [url](#)

⁸⁰ EPIC, 22/01/2020, [url](#)

⁸¹ Lead Inspector General, 25/11/2019, p. 46, [url](#)

⁸² The Jerusalem Post, 06/11/2019, [url](#); Al-Monitor, 24/01/2020, [url](#)

⁸³ Musings on Iraq, 30/12/2019, [url](#)

⁸⁴ Lead Inspector General, 25/11/2019, p. 11, 46, [url](#)

⁸⁵ Musings on Iraq, 08/01/2020, [url](#)

⁸⁶ Combating Terrorism Center, 13/08/2019, [url](#)

⁸⁷ ISW, 19/12/2019, [url](#); ISW, 06/01/2020, [url](#); ISW, 23/01/2020, [url](#); ISW, 10/01/2020, [url](#)

4.8. Violence against demonstrators and by demonstrators

The demonstrators protesting from 1 October 2019 in Baghdad and most cities in Southern Iraq faced various types of violence by the security forces, but also by not clearly identified armed groups. Demonstrators testified that water cannons sometimes spray boiling hot water, resulting in burns.⁸⁸ Tear gas grenades are sometimes fired from close range directly at the demonstrators by the police.⁸⁹ In addition, military-grade tear gas grenades are used which can cause serious and often even fatal injuries.⁹⁰ The security services also use batons to fight demonstrators, but most of the victims were killed by gunfire. In addition to the police and army, other perpetrators also fired small arms. These snipers (most likely members of the pro-Iranian militia) have been active since the first week of the protests, both in Baghdad and in the South.⁹¹

Thousands of demonstrators have been arrested. Abuse of detainees has been reported.⁹² If possible, injured demonstrators avoid being treated in hospitals because they are at risk of being arrested there.⁹³ According to the first report of the UN Mission in Iraq on the events from 1 to 9 October 2019, the security forces used firearms against the demonstrators from the first day of the demonstrations in Baghdad, and from the second in Nasiriya. Scores of demonstrators were hit in the head or in the chest. The tear gas grenades fired directly at the demonstrators also caused injuries and even fatalities. According to the same source, a minority of demonstrators also used violence by attacking the security forces with Molotov cocktails, knives and sticks. Police vehicles and buildings were also set on fire.⁹⁴

UNAMI also noted that numerous arrests had already taken place during the first wave of protests, particularly in Baghdad but also in all southern provinces. According to the independent Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights IHCHR, 1,055 people were arrested throughout Iraq from 1 to 9 October in the context of the demonstrations. Some of these arrests were made outside the demonstrations, at home or elsewhere, with UNAMI expressing concern that these arrests were made without an arrest warrant or search warrant. However, most of those arrested were released within a shorter period of time, according to some of them under the condition that they sign a promise to refrain from further participation in the demonstrations.⁹⁵

According to UNAMI, media reporting on the demonstrations have come under pressure: journalists have been banned from filming the demonstrations and have been arrested and/or beaten. Others had to erase their recordings or saw their equipment confiscated or destroyed by the security services. Media editors were also victims of targeted attacks by masked armed groups. During police checks, the smartphones of young people were checked. Those whose phones contained footage risked being arrested.⁹⁶

Reports from UNAMI, as well as from other organisations such as Human Rights Watch, the Iraqi Human Rights Commission and Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, paint a similar picture of sustained violence against demonstrators as well as against the security forces and against the buildings of institutions they targeted. The demonstrations against the authorities were no longer called off after 25 October, and are still going on. There are casualties almost every day and the number of deaths is already over 600. The demonstrations are limited to Baghdad and all the provinces

⁸⁸ HRW, 10/10/2019, [url](#)

⁸⁹ UNAMI, 03/12/2019, [url](#)

⁹⁰ The Independent, 31/10/2019, [url](#)

⁹¹ UNAMI, 22/10/2019, [url](#)

⁹² UNAMI, 22/10/2019, [url](#); UNAMI, 05/11/2019, [url](#) ; UNAMI, 11/12/2019, [url](#)

⁹³ UNAMI, 22/10/2019, [url](#)

⁹⁴ UNAMI, 22/10/2019, p. 4-5, [url](#)

⁹⁵ UNAMI, 22/10/2019, p. 6, [url](#)

⁹⁶ UNAMI, 22/10/2019, p. 7, [url](#)

of Southern Iraq, with Baghdad, Basra, Nasiriya, Karbala and Najaf being the places where most acts of violence take place.⁹⁷

Following the violent crackdown on a demonstration in Nasiriya on 28 November 2019, tribal leaders met in Dhi Qar province and demanded legal action against the military commander responsible for the deaths of at least 29 demonstrators. The tribal leaders also threatened retaliation. The commander was sacked and the justice department issued a warrant for his arrest. The tribes have taken security for the city into their own hands. They have set up armed checkpoints at the entrances to the city centre, in their own words to prevent such a serious incident from happening again. The tribes do not want any more riot troops allowed in the city, only police. The governor of Dhi Qar has resigned. Parliament has dissolved the provincial council. The tribal leaders are trying to get the situation under control. They have also echoed the demands of the demonstrators.⁹⁸

The demonstrations entered their fourth month in January 2020. Following the attack on Soleimani and Muhandis, the Shia militia and the Sadrists of Moqtada al-Sadr organised a demonstration of their own to demand an end to the American military presence in their country. This march took place on 24 January 2020 in Baghdad, at a different location from the anti-government demonstrations. The Institute for the Study of War estimates that around 250,000 people took part in the demonstration. No noteworthy incidents were reported. The demonstrators mainly wore the Iraqi flag and no banners of their own militia. This is in contrast to the militia protest march on 31 December 2019, when the US embassy was attacked by militia members waving their own flags.⁹⁹ There were no actions by security forces or other armed organisations against these demonstrations by the militias, but after the demonstration of 24 January 2020, Moqtada al-Sadr, the political leader of the Saraya al-Salam militia, withdrew his support for the anti-government demonstrators. The members of his militia who offered limited protection to the demonstrators in Baghdad and Basra withdrew it. Subsequently, the camps of the demonstrators were attacked and in the space of a few days 17 people were killed and 250 wounded in the capital and in Southern Iraq.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, 22/12/2019, [url](#); UNAMI, 05/11/2019, [url](#); UNAMI, 11/12/2019, [url](#); HRW, 31/01/2020, [url](#); HRW, 10/10/2019, [url](#); IHCHR, 02/01/2020, [url](#); IHCHR, 02/01/2020, [url](#); IHCHR, 31/12/2019, [url](#)

⁹⁸ The National, 05/12/2019, [url](#); Al-Jazeera, 11/12/2019, [url](#)

⁹⁹ ISW, 24/01/2020, [url](#)

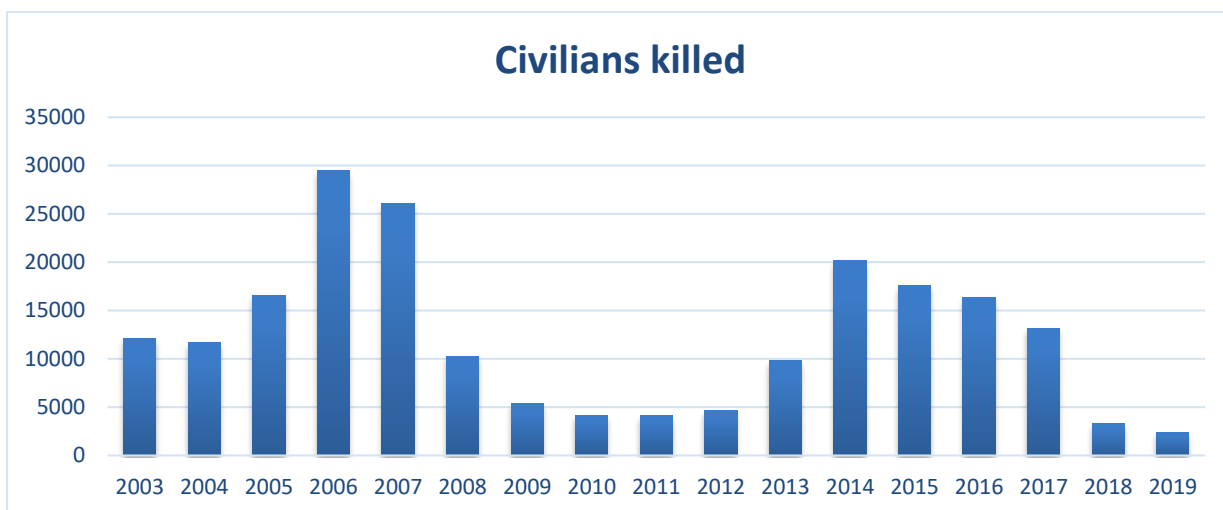
¹⁰⁰ The National, 27/01/2020, [url](#); The Telegraph, 26/01/2020, [url](#); Reuters, 25/01/2020, [url](#)

5. Targets of the violence

This chapter follows on from chapter 1.5 *Impact of the violence on the civilian population* of the EASO report on the security situation¹⁰¹ and shows the most current developments with regard to the number of (civilian) victims, as described in the *EASO Country of Origin Information Iraq Security situation (supplement) - Iraq Body Count - civilian deaths 2012, 2017-2018 of February 2019*.¹⁰²

5.1. Iraq Body Count (IBC)

IBC has not published a comprehensive analysis since the above-mentioned EASO document of February 2019. On the basis of preliminary data up to the end of December 2019, they have published a provisional number of civilian deaths throughout Iraq counted by IBC for the year 2019: 2,362, the lowest number since the beginning of their counts in 2003.¹⁰³



Iraq Body Count, Civilians killed, 2003-2019 ¹⁰⁴

IBC included the finds of bodies in mass graves in the data for the period in which they were found, rather than at the time of death. In 2019, according to IBC, 587 human bodies were found in mass graves¹⁰⁵. Although the source does not explicitly mention it, we can assume that the vast majority of these deaths occurred in the period from 2014 to 2017, the period of the conflict with ISIS.

5.2. UNAMI

At the end of 2018, the United Nations mission in Iraq stopped publishing the number of victims (dead and wounded).¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ EASO, 13/03/2019, [url](#)

¹⁰² EASO,13/03/2019, [url](#)

¹⁰³ IBC, 31/12/2019, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴ IBC, 31/12/2019, [url](#)

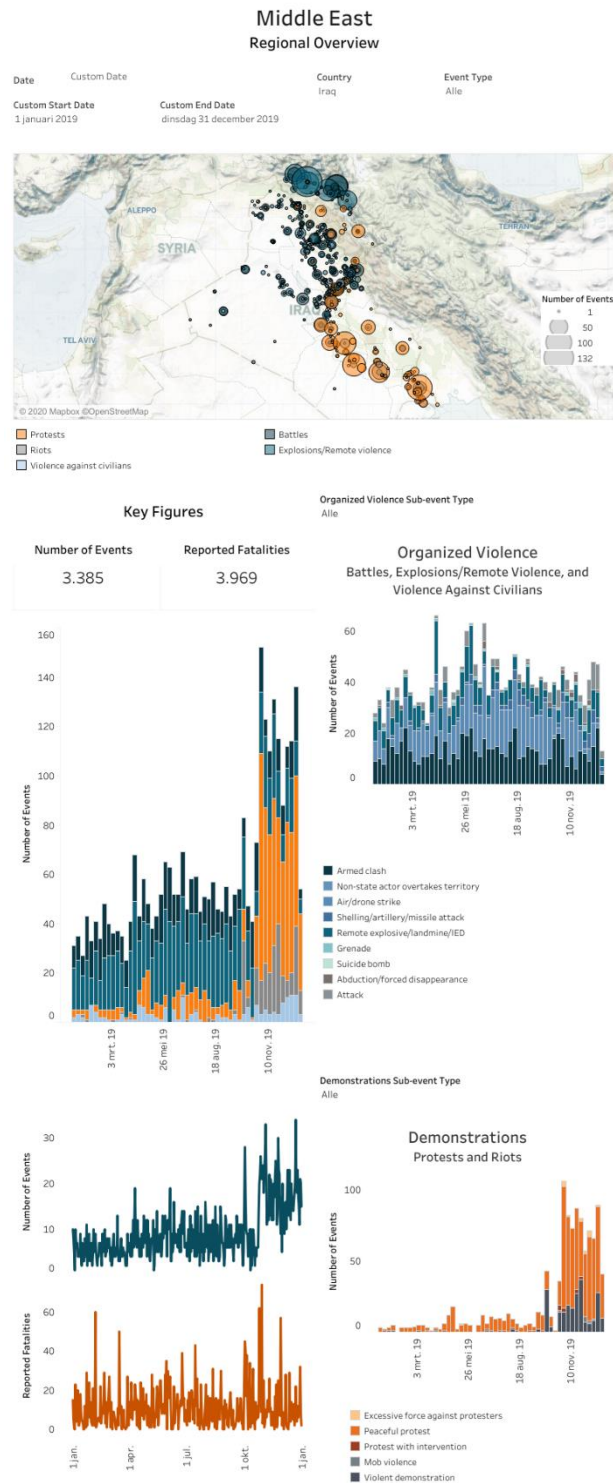
¹⁰⁵ IBC, 31/12/2019, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶ UNIRAQ, undated, [url](#)

5.3. ACLED

Another source that provides conflict data worldwide is Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). This source counted 3,385 violent incidents for the whole of 2019, resulting in 3,969 fatalities.

The number of incidents and casualties for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2019 is shown by ACLED in the following dashboard:



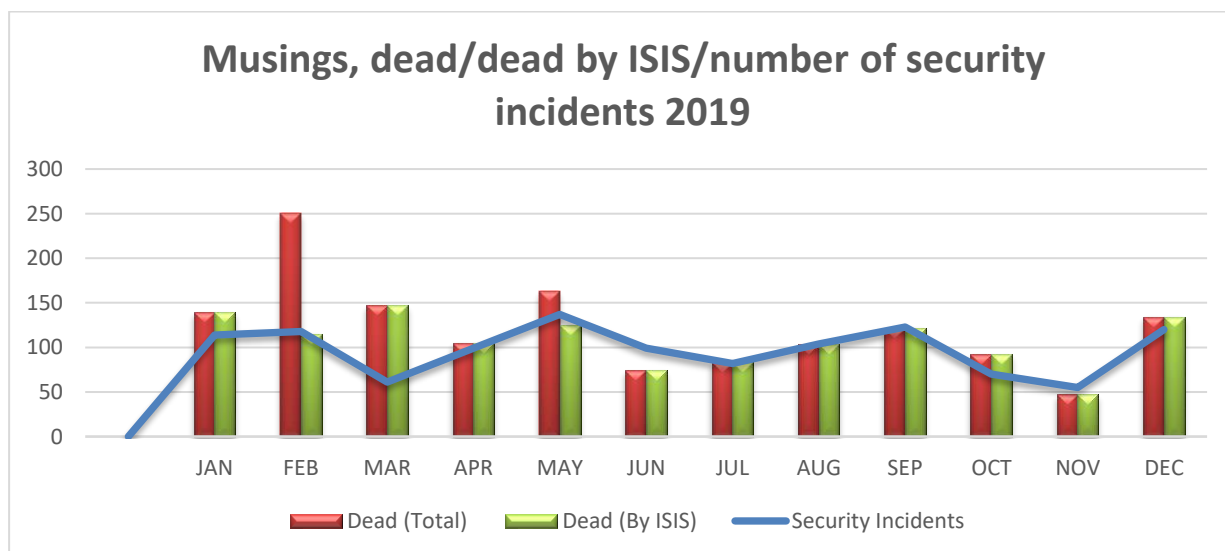
ACLED, Middle East, Regional Overview¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ ACLED, Curated data file - Middle East, Iraq, 01/01/2019-31/12/2019, [url](#)

The above is a static overview. By opening the link in the footnote different subcategories can be included or excluded.

5.4. Musings on Iraq

Joel Wing is the author of the blog Musings on Iraq. He keeps track of the number of incidents per month, both for the whole of Iraq and for part of the provinces. He also counts the number of victims. Unlike IBC, and previously UNAMI, Wing also counts the killed and wounded soldiers and members of the PMF. The graph below shows all the deaths caused by the conflict for the whole of Iraq for each month of 2019 (red) and the deaths caused by ISIS (green). Joel Wing did not attribute the mass graves to ISIS for this statistic. This explains the large deviation in February 2019, when many bodies were found in Ninewa. He also differentiates in the tables between the total incidents and those attributed to ISIS. The blue curve in the graph shows all incidents, in contrast to the graphs created by J. Wing himself, in which he only includes incidents attributable to ISIS (see below). He also did not include the number of victims who died during the demonstrations from 1 October 2019.¹⁰⁸



Musings on Iraq, Security in Iraq, 2019 (graph by Cedoca)¹⁰⁹

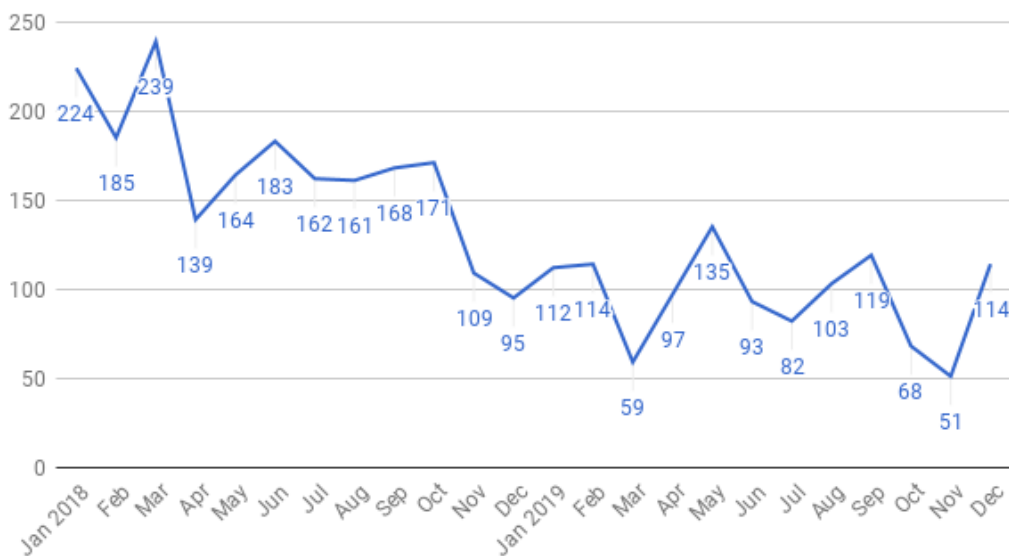
Joel Wing reports a total of 1,182 security incidents for the whole of 2019, resulting in 1,458 deaths. According to this source, 1,158 of these incidents and 1,286 of the fatalities were caused by ISIS.¹¹⁰

The number of incidents caused by ISIS, per month, from January 2018 to December 2019 shows a decrease during the course of 2019:

¹⁰⁸ Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#), graph by Cedoca

¹¹⁰ Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#)

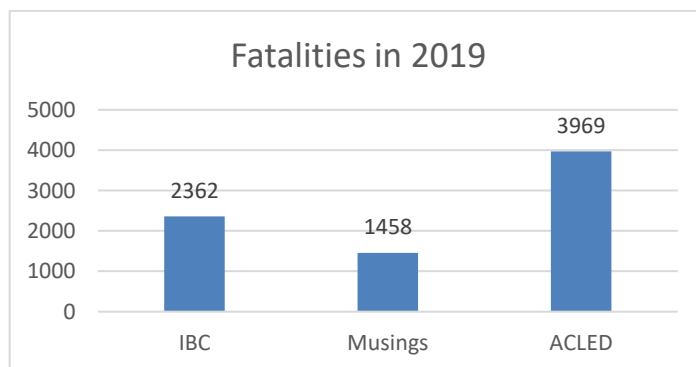


Iraq Attacks 2018-19

Musings on Iraq, Iraq Attacks, 2018-2019¹¹¹

5.5. Comparison of the number of fatalities, IBC, Musings on Iraq, ACLED

If we compare the number of fatalities as counted by the above-mentioned sources for the whole of 2019, the differences are striking:



Comparison of the number of fatalities, IBC, Musings, ACLED¹¹²

The reasons for these differences lie in the methodology and the criteria which differ from each other:

- IBC and Musings on Iraq focus exclusively on Iraq, ACLED does not.
- All three sources use both the Iraqi and international media.¹¹³
- IBC makes use of additional sources. IBC indicates that it also includes information from apolitical NGOs in Iraq, such as the Red Crescent, which mostly also appears in the media.

¹¹¹ Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#)

¹¹² ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#); Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#); IBC, 31/12/2019, [url](#)

¹¹³ IBC, 29/07/2013, [url](#); ACLED, 09/10/2019, [url](#); Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#)

IBC also consults cumulative figures from medical-legal institutions (morgues) and the Department of Public Health. This data is only used when it can be put into a spatial and temporal context. IBC also has procedures to avoid double counting.¹¹⁴

- ACLED also uses sources outside the traditional media: reports from international institutions and NGOs. Under certain conditions, reports from warring factions are also used. ACLED also has local partners who provide information, and also uses new media such as Twitter, Telegram and WhatsApp.¹¹⁵
- IBC only counts civilian victims¹¹⁶, while Musings on Iraq also includes members of the ISF, PMF, and the police (but not ISIS). For this document, however, non-civilian victims were filtered out by Cedoca.¹¹⁷ ACLED counts all victims, regardless of whether they are civilians, soldiers or ISIS militants.¹¹⁸
- Musings on Iraq is essentially the blog of one person, Joel Wing, who runs it alongside his work as a history teacher.¹¹⁹ Joel Wing also primarily focuses on the conflict with ISIS when counting the victims. IBC and ACLED are organisations with more options at their disposal.

5.6. Victims due to the demonstrations

The demonstrations from 1 October 2019 have killed hundreds of people. After the first week of protests, the Iraqi government ordered an investigation into the violence during the demonstrations. According to the report of the committee of inquiry, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) concluded that 157 people had died and 5,494 were injured during this period.¹²⁰

In an update of the situation on 5 November 2019, UNAMI stated that the demonstrations from 25 October to 4 November 2019 caused at least 97 deaths and thousands of injuries.¹²¹

In the next and currently most recent update of 11 December 2019, UNAMI stated the following:

"Since 1 October, violence during demonstrations caused at least 424 deaths and at least 8,758 injuries including members of the Iraqi security forces. The 8,758 include those injured in attacks recorded by UNAMI and do not include the thousands of demonstrators who received treatment for other injuries, particularly resulting from tear gas inhalation. These numbers are estimated to have reached 19,000."¹²²

UNAMI was prevented by the authorities from collecting data during the second phase of the demonstrations:

"During the reporting period 170 deaths and 2,264 injuries were recorded. These figures should be considered preliminary: contrary to practice in the past, the Government did not permit UNAMI to obtain official hospital statistical data concerning demonstrations related casualties or visit hospitals to interview victims."¹²³

In a press release of 30 January 2020, UNAMI stated that since 1 October 2019, at least 467 demonstrators had been killed and more than 9,000 injured. UNAMI also highlighted the fact that since 1 October 2019, there have been at least 28 incidents in which persons involved in the demonstrations

¹¹⁴ IBC, 11/09/2007, [url](#)

¹¹⁵ ACLED, 09/10/2019, [url](#)

¹¹⁶ IBC, 11/09/2007, [url](#)

¹¹⁷ Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#)

¹¹⁹ Joel Wing, undated, [url](#)

¹²⁰ UNAMI, 22/10/2019, [url](#)

¹²¹ UNAMI, 05/11/2019, [url](#)

¹²² UNAMI, 11/12/2019, [url](#)

¹²³ UNAMI, 11/12/2019, [url](#)

as participants, reporters or known activists, were attacked by armed people or with explosives. According to the UN, these attacks resulted in 18 deaths and 13 injuries. Among the victims were two reporters from Dijlah Television who were shot dead on 10 January 2020 in Basra. In Missan alone, there are credible reports of seven attacks on civilian activists who were fired at, leaving two of them dead and five others injured.¹²⁴

The Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR), the official body for the supervision and monitoring of human rights in Iraq, has published three reports since the beginning of the demonstrations, including statistics on the victims.¹²⁵

IHCHR, Demonstrations in Iraq, Report I, II & III:

Period	Dead	Injured	Arrested	Released
1-6 October 2019	127	9,494	389	384
3-15 November 2019	73	4,099	363	272
16 November-17 December 2019	127	4,240	425	235
Total	327	17,833	1,177	891

IHCHR, Demonstrations in Iraq, Report I, II & III: ¹²⁶

According to figures published by a member of the IHCHR on Facebook, by 30 January 2020 the death toll had risen to at least 536 (of which at least 17 were members of the security forces), 23,545 people were injured (of whom 3,519 were members of the security forces), 2,713 people were arrested (of whom only 328 are in detention), 72 demonstrators and activists were abducted (22 of them have been freed). This source also includes attacks on 49 demonstrators and activists, 22 of which resulted in the death of the victim, with 13 people injured, and a further 14 failed attacks.¹²⁷

The NGO Iraqi War Crimes Documentation Center is another organisation that closely monitors the demonstrations and publishes regularly on social media. This NGO has published an overview of the deaths, injuries and arrests per province from 1 October to 31 December 2019:

Province	Arrested	Killed	Injured
Baghdad	1,088	394	18,728
Diwaniya	132	24	422
Najaf	122	42	401
Missan	11	26	234
Wasit	115	4	294
Dhi Qar	526	105	1,721
Babil	158	8	232

¹²⁴ UNAMI, 30/01/2020, [url](#)

¹²⁵ IHCHR, 02/01/2020, [url](#); IHCHR, 02/01/2020, [url](#); IHCHR, 31/12/2019, [url](#)

¹²⁶ IHCHR, 02/01/2020, [url](#); IHCHR, 02/01/2020, [url](#); IHCHR, 31/12/2019, [url](#), compilation of the data by Cedoca.

¹²⁷ Ali Albayati, member of IHCHR, Facebook, 02/02/2020, [url](#)

Basra	267	51	1,079
Karbala	357	13	1,053
Muthanna	12	1	323
Anbar	4	0	0
Salah al-Din	1	0	0
Diyala	13	1	1
Total	2,806	669	24,488

Iraqi War Crimes Documentation Center ¹²⁸

The demonstrations continued in January 2020 and the Iraqi War Crimes Documentation Center published figures for the period from 1 to 20 January 2020: 191 injured, 40 killed, and 88 arrested.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Iraqi War Crimes Documentation Center, 14/01/2020, [url](#)

¹²⁹ Iraqi War Crimes Documentation Center, 23/01/2020, [url](#)

6. Geographical distribution

This chapter is linked to Chapter 2. *Governorate-level description of the security situation of the EASO report.*¹³⁰

6.1. Anbar

6.1.1. General situation

Following the comprehensive recapture of Anbar from ISIS in November 2017, the province witnessed a decline in ISIS activity in 2018.¹³¹ This trend continued in 2019. Especially from July 2019, the monthly number of attacks according to Musings on Iraq consistently remained below ten.¹³² According to a journalist from Al-Monitor who visited Al-Qa'im in West Anbar, all the residents she interviewed assessed the security situation as good. But following the opening of the border crossing with Syria (for the first time since 2012¹³³), local security actors (also according to Al-Monitor) highlighted several destabilising factors for the region, such as the weak government on the Syrian side of the border¹³⁴, and the presence of pro-Iranian groups on both sides of the border, with Israeli air strikes on the Syrian side.¹³⁵ According to Al-Monitor, one of the pro-Iranian militias, Kata'ib Imam Ali, is said to have abandoned the Al-Qa'im area completely in the course of 2019.¹³⁶ The pressure on the IDPs coming from this region to return is seen by the residents as negative for the security situation. They are suspicious of the possible return of potential ISIS sympathisers (see also below).¹³⁷

The escalation of the conflict between the US and the pro-Iranian militias increased the concern of the inhabitants of Al-Qa'im of also becoming victims of reciprocal attacks, due to the military presence of both parties in the region. The attacks on the US base in Ain al-Asad on 4 December 2019¹³⁸, on a Hezbollah base in the al-Qa'im district on 29 December 2019¹³⁹ and again on the above-mentioned US base (this time carried out by Iran) on 7 January 2020¹⁴⁰ have so far not borne out these fears: only military targets have been struck. This fear was also reflected in a temporary interruption of the reconstruction in the region affected by war damage.¹⁴¹

Unlike the other provinces of Central Iraq, Anbar is almost entirely populated by Sunni Arabs, which means that tensions between different ethnic or religious groups do not play a role.¹⁴² However, the tribal tradition is strong in Anbar and the conflict with ISIS between 2014 and 2017 created potential for conflict between groups that took sides for or against ISIS.¹⁴³ This gulf divides tribes, clans and even families. According to the head of the tribal anti-terrorism council in Nabar, Rafea al-Fahdawi (quoted by Al-Monitor), the tribes of Anbar are attempting to break the cycle of tribal conflict, revenge and retaliation that has caused a great social rift between the supporters and opponents of ISIS. According to Fahdawi, it is a complicated situation in which members of the same family have killed

¹³⁰ EASO, 13/03/2019, pp. 31-44, [url](#)

¹³¹ CTC, 14/12/2018, pp. 3-4, [url](#)

¹³² Musings on Iraq, 03/02/2020, [url](#)

¹³³ Al-Monitor, 31/10/2019, [url](#)

¹³⁴ Al-Monitor, 27/01/2020, [url](#)

¹³⁵ The Guardian, 09/09/2019, [url](#)

¹³⁶ Al-Monitor, 31/10/2019, [url](#)

¹³⁷ Al-Monitor, 31/10/2019, [url](#)

¹³⁸ The New Arab, 04/12/2019, [url](#)

¹³⁹ Al-Monitor, 30/12/2019, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰ Musings on Iraq, 08/01/2020, [url](#)

¹⁴¹ Al-Monitor, 27/01/2020, [url](#)

¹⁴² EASO, 13/03/2019, p. 60, [url](#)

¹⁴³ Al-Monitor, 22/05/2019, [url](#)

each other. Given the tribal customs, this could lead to a succession of retaliatory actions. As early as 2017, the tribes of Anbar distributed an agreement document rejecting violence and retaliation and committing themselves to solving the problems from the ISIS period. This agreement prohibits both physical and social retaliation on an individual and collective basis without the intervention of the judicial authorities and tribal laws.¹⁴⁴

In addition to tribal reconciliation efforts, the local police, Sunni Endowment (a Sunni charity), and the Norwegian Center for Conflict Resolution (NOREF) are also involved. There are also critical voices that fear in particular that ISIS members and their benevolent tribal leaders could return. A member of parliament for the Sunni National Axis Alliance (al-Mehwar al-Watani) told Al-Monitor that his party would not support reconciliation until the political parties put a settlement on the agenda concerning the compensation of victims and bringing the perpetrators to account. According to the same MP, the problem of ISIS families is the most complex in the reconciliation issue, because many Anbari are afraid of them and fear that they might commit murder and retaliatory attacks in the event of a return of Islamic State.¹⁴⁵

An additional problem in Anbar is the fact that a number of men and boys disappeared during the conflict with ISIS. During the military operations in Anbar, hundreds of men and young people were arrested by PMF and many of these missing persons have not yet been found. According to investigative journalist Jonathan Lee Krohn, hundreds of people were arrested at checkpoints manned by members of Kata'ib Hezbollah when they tried to flee from the war zone in Anbar to Baghdad.¹⁴⁶ Men are also still missing in Al-Qa'im. A tribal leader estimates that around 4,000 men from Al-Qa'im are still missing.¹⁴⁷

Anbar suffered heavy devastation during the conflict with ISIS. According to a report of the REACH Initiative from January 2019, much of the damage in Fallujah has since been repaired, partly by the UN, the Iraqi government and NGOs. Daily life in this city continues to be adversely affected, as many basic services have not yet returned to pre-conflict levels. Most of the explosives have been cleared, according to this report. The improved security situation was cited by almost all returning IDPs as the main motive for their return. Fallujah was recaptured from ISIS in June 2016.¹⁴⁸

6.1.2. Security incidents

Security incidents occurred throughout the province during the period under study. A map of Anbar showing the incidents involving explosives recorded by EPIC from March 2019 to January 2020, and all incidents recorded by ACLED from 1 January 2019 to 31 January 2020, shows the following:

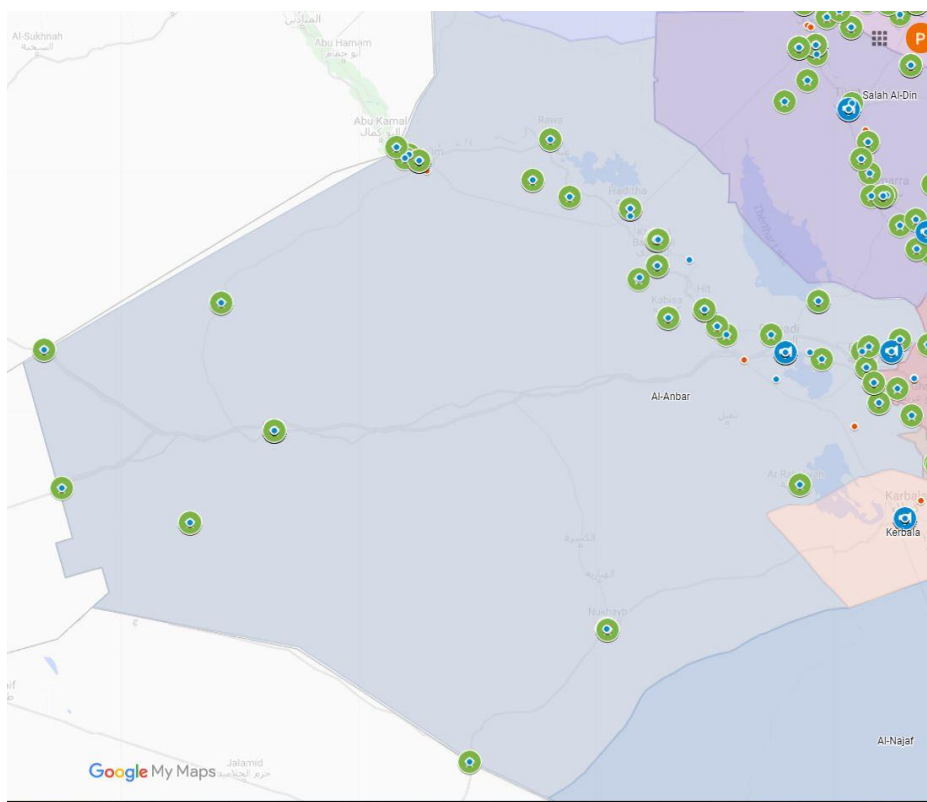
¹⁴⁴ Al-Monitor, 22/05/2019, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵ Al-Monitor, 22/05/2019, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶ Musings on Iraq, 03/01/2020, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷ Al-Monitor, 31/10/2019, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸ REACH, 28/01/2019, [url](#)



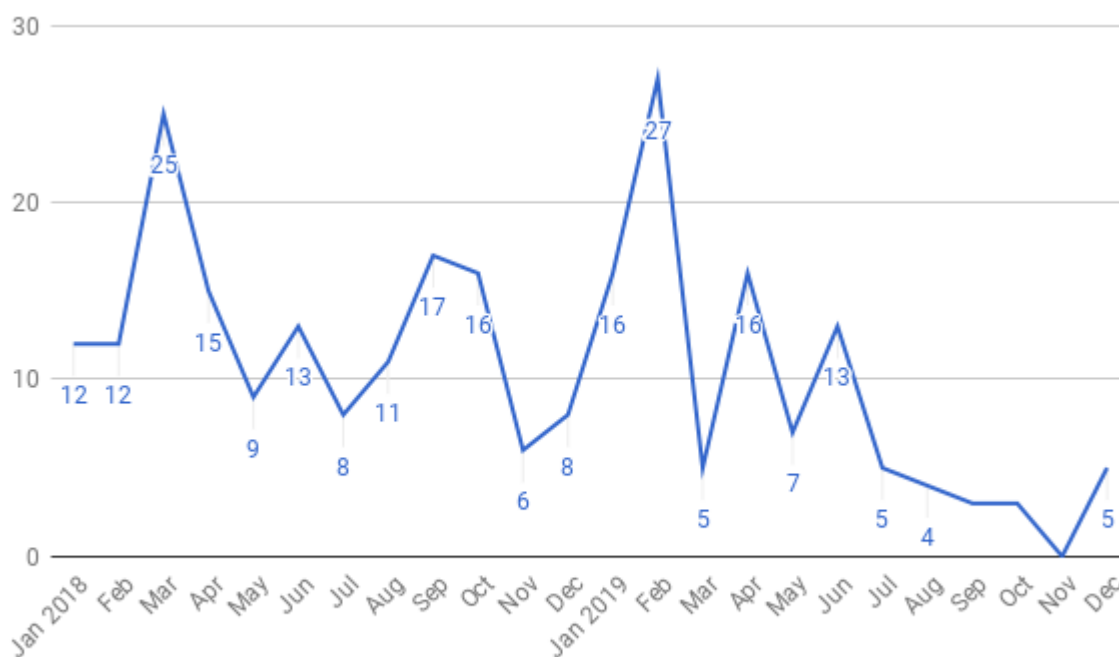
EPIC, attacks with explosives, 28/02/2019-16/01/2020; ACLED, all incidents, 01/01/2019 - 31/01/2020 (red dots = EPIC, green symbols = ACLED, attacks by ISIS, blue megaphone = demonstrations, blue dots = all events recorded by ACLED)¹⁴⁹

All populated areas of the province have been affected by security incidents during the period under study. However, it is striking that there are proportionally more confrontations between ISIS and the ISF and PMF and relatively fewer unilateral attacks on the civilian population. Of the 144 incidents recorded by ACLED in Anbar in 2019 and January 2020 with fatalities, only 25 involved civilian deaths. ACLED counted 64 civilian deaths during this period, compared to 460 combatants deaths (ISIS, ISF, PMF and police).¹⁵⁰

The number of incidents caused by ISIS per month is also recorded by Joel Wing of Musings on Iraq. Anbar has a fluctuating frequency of attacks, with a margin of 4 to 27 per month. From July 2019 onwards, the number was always below five per month:

¹⁴⁹ EPIC, 22/01/2020, [url](#); ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#), compilation by Cedoca on Google Maps, 01/02/2020, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰ ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#)



Attacks Anbar 2018-19

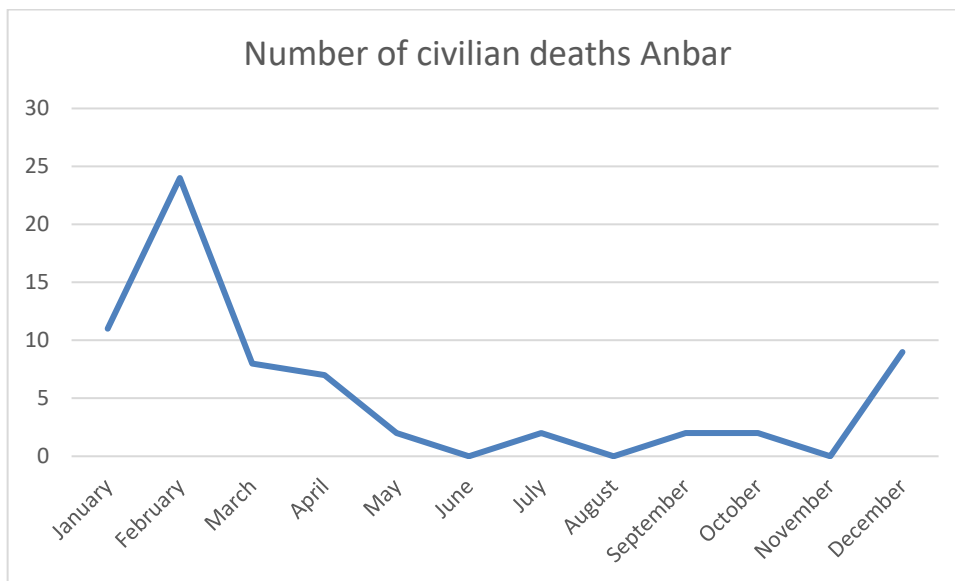
Musings on Iraq, Islamic State Makes Its Return In December 2019, 06/01/2020 ¹⁵¹

The number of civilian victims identified by Musings on Iraq in Anbar in 2019 remains relatively limited. Joel Wing explained the temporary rise in February 2019 due to the infiltration of ISIS fighters from Syria after the loss of their last remaining territory in Baghouz.¹⁵² It is also striking that the number of civilian deaths in Anbar before 2019 recorded by both ACLED and Musings on Iraq is almost the same: 64 by ACLED, 67 by Musings.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#)

¹⁵² Musings on Iraq, 04/03/2019, [url](#)

¹⁵³ ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#); Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#)



Wing, J., Musings on Iraq, Iraqi Deaths in 2019, Anbar ¹⁵⁴

Overview of security incidents in Anbar in 2019 and January 2020 with civilian fatalities, by ACLED¹⁵⁵

Date	District	Location	Source	Notes	Fatalities
11/01/2019	Al Qaim	Al Qaim	Anadolu Agency	On Jan 11, at least two people were killed and another 25 injured (among them at least 5 are security personnel) by a suspected IS car-bomb that exploded near a public market in Anbar's city of Al-Qaim near the Syrian border.	2
13/01/2019	Falluja	Qaryat al Naimiyah	Amaq	On Jan 13, IS militants abducted and killed the Mukhtar of the al Musalamah village (Faisal Rashid al-Jamili) as well as burning his vehicle in al-Naimiyah, south of Falluja.	1
25/01/2019	Hit	Al Baghdadi	Al Maloomah	On Jan 25, an IS remnant IED exploded in the al Baghdadi desert in Hit district, killing 1 civilian and his wife as well as injuring their child.	2
28/01/2019	Haditha	Haditha	Anadolu Agency	As reported on Jan 28, suspected IS militants shot dead three Iraqi civilians in Anbar province. Security forces found the bodies in the desert west of Haditha district with gunshot wounds to the heads.	3

¹⁵⁴ Musings on Iraq, undated, [url](#), compilation by Cedoca

¹⁵⁵ ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#); in January 2020 ACLED did not count civilian deaths in Anbar.

31/01/2019	Falluja	Qaryat al Naimiyah	Yaqein	As reported on Jan 31, an unidentified armed group dressed in military uniforms killed the Mukhtar (Mahawish Karim) of al Naimiyah area with gunfire in the al Difar area near al Naimiyah.	1
10/02/2019	Ar Rutba	Ar Rahhaliyah	Al Maloomah	As reported on Feb 10, an IS war remnant IED exploded in al Rayhanah, in Ar Rutba district, killing 1 civilian and injuring 2 others.	1
16/02/2019	Ramadi	Ramadi	Al Maloomah	On Feb 16, an IS war remnant IED exploded while shepherders were passing through al-Salam intersection east of Ramadi city, killing 2 and injuring 1.	2
17/02/2019	Haditha	Haditha	Twitter; Liveuamap	As reported on Feb 17, a child was killed and 3 others were injured as a suspected IS IED exploded in Haditha city, Anbar province.	1
18/02/2019	Haditha	Haditha	Al Maloomah	As reported on Feb 18, an IS remnant landmine exploded while a family was truffle picking in the desert of Haditha district, killing 1 child and injuring 2 others.	1
19/02/2019	Ar Rutba	An Nukhayb	Anadolu Agency	As reported on Feb 19, IS militants executed (by gunfire) 6 civilians abducted earlier from the Al-Nukhayb desert region, as security forces found their bodies.	6
23/02/2019	Ramadi	Tharthar	AP	On Feb 23, 5 armed fishermen were killed in an IS attack on a campsite near Tharthar lake, while 3 militants were wounded in the subsequent firefight.	5
24/02/2019	Anah	Anah	Al Sumaria TV	On Feb 24, a civilian was killed by an IS remnant IED explosion while truffle hunting in Anah city, west of Ramadi.	1
24/02/2019	Ar Rutba	Ar Rutba	Airwars	On Mar 24, a girl was killed and a man injured when an American forces airstrike allegedly struck a house in Al-Oudan area, north of Rutba, Anbar province. Other members of the family were arrested.	1
26/02/2019	Falluja	Qaryat al Naimiyah	AP	On Feb 26, a suspected IS planted IED exploded in the Naimiya district in the western city of Fallujah, killing 3 Iraqi construction workers, and injuring 3 others.	3
01/03/2019	Ar Rutba	Ar Rutba	Al Sumaria TV	As reported on Mar 1, IS militants executed 5 abducted civilians from Ar-Rutba and al-Nukhayab and their bodies were found southwest of Ar Rutba desert with gunshot wounds.	5
06/03/2019	Anah	Anah	Yaqein	On Mar 06, an IS remnant IED exploded targeting a family that	1

				went truffle hunting in Anah district, killing 1 man and injuring his wife.	
15/03/2019	Ar Rutba	Ar Rutba	Liveuamap; Twitter	As reported on Mar 15, IS militants executed 1 of the remaining hostages abducted from Rutbah after 23 days of captivity.	1
30/03/2019	Ar Rutba	Akashat	Amaq	As reported on Mar 30, the explosion of two IS planted IEDs near Akashat area in Ar Rutba district, killed and injured 8 Iraqi personnel. Fatalities coded as half due to unclear nature of the casualties.	4
04/04/2019	Ar Rutba	Ar Rutba	Al Maloomah	On Apr 04, an IS-suspected booby-trapped vehicle in the al Anaz desert area, south of Rutba district, exploded killing 3 civilians truffle hunting and injuring 1.	3
05/06/2019	Hit	Al Baghdadi	Basnews	Reported on 05 06 2019, a landmine planted by IS militants, killed 2 civilians, in Al Baghdadi of Hit district, Anbar.	2
01/08/2019	Falluja	Qaryat Albu Jamil	Al Mirbad	On Aug 1, IS militants attacked the village of Albu Jamil in Sayed Gharib, and the PMF repelled the attack killing 3 fighters and 2 civilians from one family.	5
21/09/2019	Ramadi	Ramadi	Xinhua	On Sept 21, IS militants broke into a house, belonging to a member of the TMF at the outskirts of al-Kheirat, east of Ramadi city, and shot and killed 4 of his family members.	4
24/11/2019	Al Qaim	Al Karabilah	Al Ghad Press	On Nov 24, a young girl who was on her way back from school was shot and killed inside a car by the TMF at a TMF checkpoint in Karabilah city in al-Qaim district,	1
18/12/2019	Haditha	Haditha	Al Maloomah	On Dec 18, IS militants opened fire at a civilian car in Haditha district leaving 3 civilians killed and 1 injured.	3
30/12/2019	Falluja	Qaryat al Naimiyah	Al Sumaria TV	On Dec 30, 5 students were killed by the explosion of an IS planted IED in al-Naimiya village, south of Fallujah.	5

6.2. Baghdad

6.2.1. General situation

The events in Baghdad in 2019 and January 2020 show three major developments:

First, violence by ISIS continued to fall, and in particular the number and impact of bomb attacks with explosives (whether or not by suicide bombers) continued to decline. The threat posed by ISIS

continued to decline during the period under study. This viewpoint is shared by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Joel Wing of Musings on Iraq.¹⁵⁶ According to the Dutch *Algemeen Ambtsbericht* of December 2019, there is a further scaling back of checkpoints. Checks (by the PMF) are taking place more often within neighbourhoods. According to the *Ambtsbericht*, Sunni neighbourhoods are primarily checked by the army.¹⁵⁷ Due to the demonstrations, there are more roadblocks in the centre.¹⁵⁸ The civilian population is also sometimes inconvenienced by security operations against ISIS hideouts and weapons arsenals, whereby residents of the area where the operation is taking place are sometimes unable to leave or return to their homes for several days. According to the Dutch *Ambtsbericht*, these operations are usually unannounced, but the residents are informed when they are completed. These operations mainly take place in the rural outlying areas of the province. Also according to the *Ambtsbericht*, ISIS fighters have been killed in these operations, but there have been no civilian casualties.¹⁵⁹ However, there are also observers who warn that ISIS could become strong again in Baghdad by exploiting the distracted attention of the security services due to the demonstrations in the capital. This viewpoint is shared by Ahmed al-Sharifi, a military analyst, in Al-Monitor. The same article also states that ISIS has no intention of attacking the demonstrations, but that the terrorist organisation is trying to take advantage of the public dissatisfaction and commotion generated by the demonstrations in the capital.¹⁶⁰

The second important development is the demonstrations that have dominated political life in the capital (and Southern Iraq) from the beginning of October 2019. These are already discussed in chapters 2 to 5 of this document (see above). The capital has experienced a significant number of demonstrations. Just over half of all victims of these demonstrations have been killed in Baghdad. The demonstrations are mainly concentrated in the centre, with Tahrir Square and the adjoining streets as the epicentre of the protest movement. The demonstrations also take place in other locations: at the bridges over the Tigris that lead to the International Zone, on the road from the capital to the airport, but also in various other places in the centre, such as Teyran and Gilani squares, in the districts of Karrada, Kadamiyah and Sadr City, and in other places.¹⁶¹

The third development is the increase in tensions between Iran and America, which has had a direct impact on the security situation in the Iraqi capital. The escalation of hostilities between Iran and pro-Iranian militias and the US in Baghdad started with the attack on the US Embassy in the International Zone, reached its peak with the drone attack on Soleimani and Muhandis, and continued with regular shelling of US military installations and the international coalition by PMF units or by Iran. These shellings also hit installations and troops of the Iraqi army in the same places as those of the coalition. It is not always clear who has fired missiles. In one case, the rocket attack was aimed at a media company in the district of Karrada. One civilian was killed in this attack (see below). ACLED counted 25 such attacks in the province of Baghdad.¹⁶²

6.2.2. Security incidents

Security incidents occurred throughout the province during the period under study. A map of Baghdad showing the incidents involving explosives recorded by EPIC from March 2019 to January 2020,

¹⁵⁶ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20/12/2019, [url](#); Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20/12/2019, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20/12/2019, [url](#); Live UA Map Iraq, 2020, [url](#)

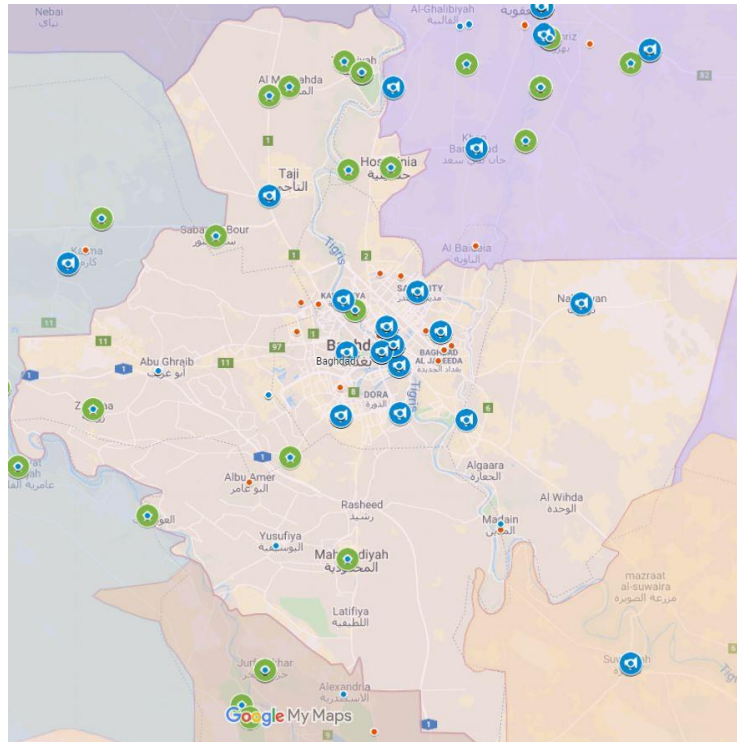
¹⁵⁹ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20/12/2019, p. 14, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰ Al-Monitor, 21/12/2019, [url](#)

¹⁶¹ Live UA Map Iraq, 2020, [url](#); UNAMI, 22/10/2019, pp. 4-5, [url](#); UNAMI, 05/11/2019, p. 5, [url](#); UNAMI, 11/12/2019, p. 4, [url](#)

¹⁶² ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#)

together with all incidents recorded by ACLED from 1 January 2019 to 31 January 2020, shows the following image:



EPIC, attacks with explosives, 28/02/2019-16/01/2020; ACLED, all incidents, 01/01/2019 - 31/01/2020 (red dots = EPIC, green symbols = ACLED, attacks by ISIS, blue megaphone = demonstrations, blue dots = all events recorded by ACLED)¹⁶³

ACLED counted a total of 346 security incidents, 118 of which resulted in fatalities. ACLED counted 35 incidents not related to the demonstrations in which civilians were killed, totalling 64 deaths. Moreover, ACLED recorded 51 incidents with fatalities during the demonstrations in which, according to ACLED, 238 people were killed. Victims from the police forces were also counted.¹⁶⁴ (Regarding the victims of the demonstrations, see above, chapter 5. Targets of the violence). ACLED registered a total of 375 civilian deaths from the violence during the period under study, the other 73 deaths are members of the army, the police, the PMF, and also ISIS fighters.¹⁶⁵

The number of suicide attacks in the period under study is especially low compared to previous periods. ACLED recorded three suicide attacks by ISIS in the province of Baghdad, one of which involved two suicide attackers. According to ACLED, the death toll of these attacks was 22 (see list of attacks with civilian casualties below). In addition, ACLED counted some fifty other attacks involving explosives. These were IEDs, roadside bombs and car bombs. According to ACLED, they caused 30 deaths, of which 9 civilians and 7 demonstrators (see list of attacks with civilian casualties below). The remaining fatalities of these attacks were members of the ISF and the PMF.¹⁶⁶

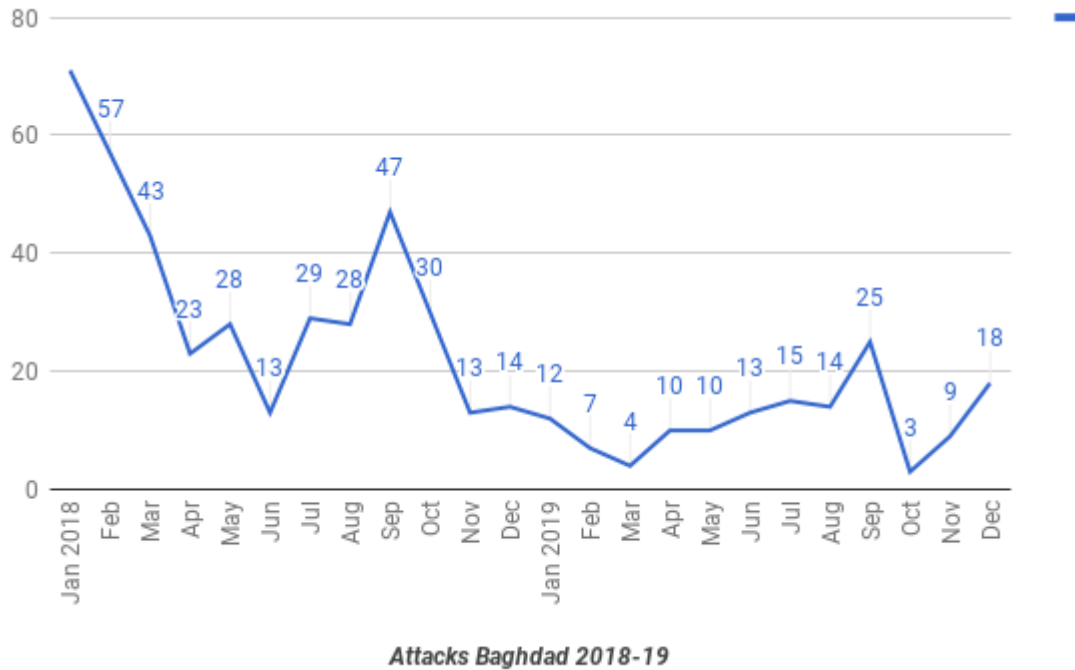
¹⁶³ EPIC, 22/01/2020, [url](#); ACLED, compilation by Cedoca on Google Maps, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴ ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵ ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶ ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#)

The number of incidents caused by ISIS per month is also recorded by Joel Wing of Musings on Iraq. The province of Baghdad was subjected to many heavy attacks by the terrorist organisation during the height of the ISIS campaign in 2013 to 2015, but in 2019 this dropped to less than one attack by ISIS per day for the entire province, and never more than 25 per month:

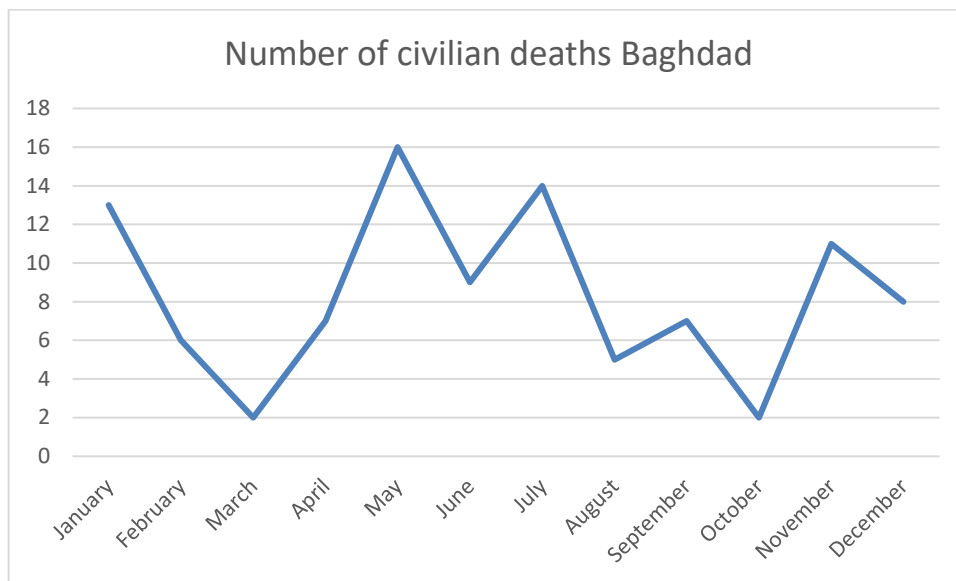


Musings on Iraq, Islamic State Makes Its Return In December 2019, 06/01/2020 ¹⁶⁷

Musings on Iraq counted 100 civilian victims in Baghdad in 2019, excluding the demonstrations. By way of comparison, ACLED registered 64 civilian deaths (excluding demonstrations) in Baghdad for 2019 and January 2020. It should be noted, however, that in a number of fatal incidents counted by Musings, it is not clear whether there is a link with the demonstrations, whereas the link is clearly indicated by ACLED.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸ ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#); Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#)



Wing, J., Musings on Iraq, Iraqi Deaths, Baghdad ¹⁶⁹

The figures from the different consulted sources differ as regards the victims of the conflict with ISIS and other actors of violence, as well as the victims of the demonstrations, (for the demonstrations see above, Chapter 5. Targets of the violence). It is clear that in Baghdad, from early October 2019, the vast majority of civilian deaths occurred in confrontations during the demonstrations and in attacks on demonstrators and activists outside the actual protests. From the following list by ACLED of all incidents with civilian fatalities outside the demonstrations, it also appears that most attacks are targeted:

Overview of security incidents in Baghdad in 2019 and 2020 with civilian fatalities, by ACLED¹⁷⁰

Date	District	Location	Source	Notes	Fat.
29/01/2019	Al Tarmia	At Tarmiyah	Anadolu Agency; Al Sumaria TV	On Jan 29, suspected IS militants opened fire on a cafe in northern Baghdad province, killing 3 civilians.	3
30/01/2019	Al Tarmia	Al Mushahidah	Amaq	On Jan 30, a Mukhtar who is allegedly also a spy (Wissam al Obeidi) for the Iraqi security forces was killed by IS gunfire near the Monshaat al Nasr area in al Moshahada.	1
09/05/2019	Sadr City	Baghdad - Sadr City	NRT News; Al Maloomah; Arab News	On May 9, an IS suicide bomber killed at least 8 people and injured 10 others in a marketplace in the Sadr City district of Baghdad.	8
11/06/2019	Adhamiya	Baghdad - Adhamiya	Al Sumaria TV	On 11 06 2019, unidentified armed men shot and killed 1 civilian in Adhamiya area of Baghdad city.	1

¹⁶⁹ Musings on Iraq, undated, [url](#), compilation by Cedoca

¹⁷⁰ ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#)

16/06/2019	Sadr City	Baghdad - Sadr City	Al Sumaria TV	On June 16, unidentified armed men using silenced guns opened fire at a civilian in Al-Husainiya neighborhood (Sadr City) in northern Baghdad, killing him.	1
21/06/2019	9 Nissan	Baghdad - 9 Nissan	Arab News; Al Maloomah	On June 21, a unidentified suicide bomber wearing an explosive belt, detonated their belt in Husseinayah al Muntazar in Baladiyat area (9 Nissan) Baghdad, killing 7 civilians and injuring more than 20 others.	7
09/07/2019	Mahmudiya	Al Yusufiyah	Yaqein	On July 9, unidentified armed men killed a tribal Sheikh and the Mukhtar of Yusufiyah district.	1
15/07/2019	Al Rashid	Baghdad - Al Rashid	NRT News; Yaqein	On July 15, two IS suicide bombers detonated themselves inside a Shia mosque in the Maalf area (Al Rashid) south of Baghdad, and an IS planted IED inside the mosque also exploded killing 5 civilians and injuring at least 20 others. 7 fatalities coded including the fatalities of the 2 attackers.	7
15/07/2019	Dujail	Sabaa Al Bour	NRT News; Yaqein	On July 15, 1 civilian was killed and 4 others were injured by the explosion of an IS motorcycle bomb blast in the Saba Bour area north of Baghdad.	1
16/07/2019	Mahmudiya	Al Mahmudiyah	Al Nabaa	On July 16, IS militants raided the home of an alleged spy for the security forces in al Mahmudiyah, south of Baghdad, and killed him.	1
26/08/2019	Al Tarmia	At Tarmiyah	National Iraqi News Agency	On Aug 26, unidentified gunmen killed tribal Sheikh Abdul Rahman Al-Othman in Tarmiyah area inside his house.	1
04/10/2019	Rusafa	Baghdad - Rusafa	Al Mirbad	On Oct 4, 2 police personnel and 2 civilians were killed by unidentified snipers in al Tayaran area and Nakheel Mall (Rusafa), Baghdad city.	4
08/10/2019	Sadr City	Baghdad - Sadr City	Basnews	On Oct 08, at least 1 Iraqi security personnel was killed and 4 others were injured after unidentified armed men opened fire at them in Sadr City, after being stationed there to protect government buildings following a week of demonstrations.	1
19/10/2019	Kadhimiya	Taji	Al Sumaria TV	Reported on 19 October 2019, unidentified armed men shot and killed 1 civilian, in Taji of Kadhimiya district, Baghdad.	1
04/11/2019	Al Tarmia	At Tarmiyah	Al Sumaria TV	As reported on November 4, 1 civilian was killed and one wounded in an attack by an unidentified armed group in at-Tarmiyah north of Baghdad.	1
17/11/2019	Karadah	Baghdad - Karadah	Shafaq News	On Nov 17, an unidentified rocket reportedly hit a media firm in al-Karrada district in Baghdad which houses studios for several local and foreign TV channels, killing 1 person. The missile was reportedly fired from the Camp Sara area.	1

26/11/2019	Adhamiya	Baghdad - Adhamiya	AP; Anadolu Agency; Xinhua	On Nov 26, an unidentified roadside bomb explosion in northeastern Shaab city (Adhamiya), leaving 6 people killed and 9 others injured. No one claimed the attack thus far.	6
02/12/2019	Rusafa	Baghdad - Rusafa	Yaqein	On 02 December 2019, unknown gunmen shot and killed 1 lawyer in Rusafa area of Baghdad city.	1
16/12/2019	Al Tarmia	Qaryat al Abayichi	Al Sumaria TV; Al Maloomah	On Dec 16, an IS attack, involving the detonation of trucks and the exchange of gunfire at an Iraqi forces checkpoint in Abayichi near al Moshahada area, north of Baghdad left 3 soldiers killed and 1 civilian, as well as injuring 5 soldiers.	1
19/12/2019	Abu Ghraib	Abu Ghraib	Al Ghad Press	On Dec 19, a civilian tasked with guard duty in Abu Ghraib was shot and killed by unidentified armed men.	1
25/12/2019	Sadr City	Baghdad - Sadr City	Al Ghad Press; Xinhua	On Dec 25, an unidentified motorcycle exploded in Sadr city in Baghdad city killing 1 civilian and injuring 4 others.	1
27/12/2019	Abu Ghraib	Abu Ghraib	Al Sumaria TV	On Dec 27, unidentified armed men on a motorcycle opened fire in Abu Ghraib district killing 1 civilian.	1
27/12/2019	Adhamiya	Baghdad - Adhamiya	Al Sumaria TV	On Dec 27, unidentified armed men opened fire in Shaab (Adhamiya), northeast in Baghdad city killing 1 civilian.	1
30/12/2019	Kadhimiya	Taji	Al Mirbad	On Dec 30, unidentified armed men kidnapped a tribal chief and killed his niece in al-Taji, northern Baghdad.	1
31/12/2019	Baghdad	Baghdad	Al Sumaria TV	On Dec 31, a tribal chief in Baghdad city was killed by the explosion of an unidentified IED.	1
04/01/2020	Al Mada'in	Jisr Diyala	Al Sumaria TV	On Jan 4, unidentified armed men opened fire at a civilian in Jisr Diyala area killing him immediately.	1
05/01/2020	Baghdad	Baghdad	Sotaliraq	On 05 January 2020, a captain in the army was stabbed and shot dead in his house in Baghdad city by an unknown armed group.	1
09/01/2020	Abu Ghraib	Abu Ghraib	Al Ghad Press	On 09 January, 2020, an unknown armed group, opened fire on a civilian in Abu Ghraib town, in Baghdad province, killing him.	1
13/01/2020	Al Mada'in	Nahrawan	Al Sumaria TV	On 13 January, 2020, an unknown armed group attacked and killed a civilian using silenced weapons while passing in Nahrawan city south east of Baghdad city.	1
15/01/2020	Baghdad	Baghdad	Al Ghad Press; Al Sumaria TV	On 15 January 2020, an unknown armed group attacked a police officer in his house, killing him, in Al Ma'amel neighbourhood in Baghdad city.	1
16/01/2020	Sadr City	Baghdad - Sadr City	Al Sumaria TV	On 16 January, 2020, a 15 year old girl's body with gunshot marks on the head was found in Tarek neighbourhood in Sadr City.	1

16/01/2020	Kadhimiya	Taji	Al Sumaria TV	On 16 January, 2020, an unknown armed group attacked and killed a civilian while passing in Taji city, using silenced guns.	1
17/01/2020	Mahmudiya	Al Mahmudiyah	Al Sumaria TV	On 17 January, 2020, a police officer was killed in Al Mahmudiyah city south of Baghdad city near his house, by an unknown armed group.	1
28/01/2020	Baghdad	Baghdad	Al Ghad Press	On Jan 28, unidentified armed men shot and killed a retired military officer in Daoura area in Baghdad city.	1
28/01/2020	Al Rashid	Baghdad - Al Rashid	Al Ghad Press	On Jan 28, unidentified armed men shot and killed a professor near his home in Baghdad city.	1

6.3. Diyala

6.3.1. Territorial control

The Iraqi army announced in October 2017 that, in response to the Kurdish independence referendum, it was taking control of the district of Khanaqin and the subdistrict of Jalawla, the disputed territories of Diyala province.¹⁷¹



Musings on Iraq, Security handover in Diyala allows Islamic State to rebuild, 27/11/2018¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ BBC, 18/10/2017, [url](#)

¹⁷² Musings on Iraq, 27/11/2018, [url](#)

In the city of Khanaqin, thanks to prior consultation between the PUK and the Iraqi army, the seizure of power took place without violence.¹⁷³ The Popular Mobilization Forces, which are present in oil-rich Khanaqin (mainly Badr and AAH), also strengthened their dominant position and, together with the Iraqi security forces, took over law enforcement.¹⁷⁴ Their presence favours the local Shia population, to the detriment of the Kurdish majority.¹⁷⁵ At the same time, the PUK is still present and is allowed to continue certain administrative tasks in Khanaqin. For example, the Kurdish security service Asayesh is allowed to remain present at checkpoints, albeit without permission to make arrests.¹⁷⁶ The local population of Khanaqin considers that the Iraqi army and Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) are undermanned in the region, resulting in a deterioration of the security situation.¹⁷⁷ In the district of Khanaqin, several villages are being abandoned as ISIS is becoming more and more prominent in the region.¹⁷⁸

The originally Kurdish city of Jalawla, located west of Khanaqin, now has an Arab majority. The Kurds live at odds with the local Karawi tribe. With the capture of the region by the Iraqi army and the PMF (primarily Badr and AAH) in October 2017, the peshmergas left Khanaqin and many Kurds fled the city. Members of the Kurdish security forces in particular are not returning for the time being. The Kurdish minority in the city feels disadvantaged by the Sunni militia set up by AAH in the region.¹⁷⁹ AAH is allowing Sunni Arabs who fled Jalawla in the past to return to the region, on condition that they join this militia.¹⁸⁰

The tensions between the Iraqi and Kurdish governments over law enforcement in the disputed territories provide ISIS with an opportunity to strike.¹⁸¹ The lack of consultation between the Iraqi army and the PMF in the disputed territories north of Diyala provides a further opportunity for ISIS to re-emerge.¹⁸²

The Hamrin mountain range, which extends from Iran across the province of Diyala to the provinces of Kirkuk and Salah al-Din, constitutes a safe haven for ISIS.¹⁸³ According to the lieutenant general of the Iraqi army in Diyala, ISIS fighters are hiding in this mountainous area. Operating in small groups, they carry out attacks in the region with IEDs and snipers. Fake checkpoints are also set up to carry out kidnappings.¹⁸⁴ In 2019, the Iraqi army carried out a number of military operations there.¹⁸⁵ Lahur Talabany, an anti-terrorist expert from the Kurdish government, reported to the BBC that ISIS does not seek territorial control in the province of Diyala. Their hideouts in the Hamrin Mountains serve as a base for the increasing number of terrorist acts in the area.¹⁸⁶

The following map, published by The Economist, shows the location of the Hamrin Mountains:

¹⁷³ ICG, 14/12/2018, [url](#), p. 15

¹⁷⁴ Skelton M., Saleem Z.A., 14/02/2019, pp. 12-13, [url](#)

¹⁷⁵ ICG, 14/12/2018, p. 15, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶ Saleem, A. Z., Skelton, M. and van den Toorn, C., 06/12/2018, [url](#)

¹⁷⁷ Saleem, A. Z., Skelton, M. and van den Toorn, C., 06/12/2018, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸ Kirkuk Now, 29/01/2020, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹ Saleem, A. Z., Skelton, M. and van den Toorn, C., 06/12/2018, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰ Skelton, M. and Saleem, Z.A., 14/02/2019, p. 14, [url](#)

¹⁸¹ Musings on Iraq, 27/11/2018, [url](#); ICG, 11/10/2019, pp. 6-7, [url](#); UNHCR, 12/11/2019, pp. 16-17, [url](#)

¹⁸² Musings on Iraq, 27/11/2018, [url](#)

¹⁸³ CTC, 10/09/2018, [url](#)

¹⁸⁴ Reuters, 24/07/2018, [url](#)

¹⁸⁵ Kurdistan 24, 11/04/2019, [url](#); Kurdistan 24, 21/12/2019, [url](#); Reuters, 14/04/2019, [url](#); Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 12/04/2019, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶ BBC, 23/12/2019, [url](#)



The Economist, Iraq and the Kurds: the other Jerusalem, 04/04/2007¹⁸⁷

6.3.2. General situation

Due to the diversity of religions and population groups in the province, Diyala is described as an ethno-sectarian microcosm of Iraq.¹⁸⁸ According to the USDOS, alleged ISIS sympathisers and/or their relatives are being evicted from their homes in Diyala.¹⁸⁹ Sunni Arabs in the province also report harassment and kidnappings by members of the Popular Mobilization Forces. Sunni IDPs from the region are faced with difficulties when returning to their homeland.¹⁹⁰ The USDOS also reports that the Kurdish population in the district of Khanaqin is suffering discrimination and, in a number of cases, violence on the part of the Iraqi armed forces, in particular the Popular Mobilization Forces.¹⁹¹ Members of the Kakai minority in the province have also complained of discrimination and intimidation on the part of the Popular Mobilization Forces.¹⁹² The predominantly Shia Fayli Kurds in the region are on better terms with the Popular Mobilization Forces. In the district of Khanaqin, a local PMF-brigade 110 has been set up. This brigade belongs to Badr and is primarily made up of Fayli Kurds.¹⁹³

The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) has reported that the PMF of Badr, who traditionally play a leading role in the province of Diyala, are failing to permanently eradicate ISIS in the region. According to the IISS, Badr also failed in its administration of Diyala.¹⁹⁴ According to Sanad for Peacebuilding and Social Inquiry, Diyala's poor public services, lack of employment and continuing

¹⁸⁷ The Economist, 04/04/2007, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸ CTC, 09/2018, p. 36, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹ USDOS, 21/06/2019, [url](#); Washington Post, 9/01/2019, [url](#)

¹⁹⁰ USDOS, 21/06/2019, [url](#)

¹⁹¹ USDOS, 13/03/2019, [url](#)

¹⁹² USDOS, 21/06/2019, [url](#)

¹⁹³ CTC, 10/08/2019, [url](#)

¹⁹⁴ IISS, 06/11/2019, [url](#)

ethno-sectarian tensions are a breeding ground for the resurgence of ISIS in the province.¹⁹⁵ According to ICG, the failure of government action, the lack of investment in public infrastructure and the crisis in the (mental) health sector threaten stability in the province.¹⁹⁶

The international network for citizen investigative journalism Bellingcat reported in June 2019 that fires were started in several agricultural areas in Diyala in the spring of 2019. ISIS claimed responsibility for these fires, which were observed in the district of Khanaqin and elsewhere. ISIS also used this tactic in the province in the past.¹⁹⁷ Reuters does not attribute these field fires exclusively to ISIS. According to some farmers, Shia militias also use this tactic, for example to target alleged supporters of ISIS.¹⁹⁸ According to the Kurdish population of Khanaqin, the acts of arson are intended to drive them out of the region and are part of the policy of Arabisation being pursued in the region.¹⁹⁹

In August 2019, the Iraqi authorities in Diyala closed the Iran-Iraq border crossing at Mandali, as drugs and weapons were being smuggled into the country via this route.²⁰⁰

In the autumn of 2019, demonstrations also took place in Diyala, albeit on a smaller scale than in Baghdad and in the south of Iraq.²⁰¹ On 20 January 2020, a demonstrator was killed in Baquba during a confrontation between demonstrators and riot police over the closure of a bridge.²⁰²

6.3.3. Security incidents

Security incidents occurred throughout the province during the period under study: in addition to air attacks on presumed ISIS hideouts in the Hamrin mountains, there were military ground operations by the ISF and PMF against ISIS, as well attacks by the terrorist organisation on the Iraqi Security Forces, PMF and also on civilians. There were many security incidents in the district of Khanaqin in particular.²⁰³ The New York Times reported almost weekly security incidents in the disputed northeast of Diyala.²⁰⁴

A map of Diyala showing the incidents involving explosives recorded by EPIC from March 2019 to January 2020, and all incidents recorded by ACLED from 1 January 2019 to 31 January 2020, shows the following image:

¹⁹⁵ Sanad for Peacebuilding and Social Inquiry, 14/06/2018, [url](#)

¹⁹⁶ International Crisis Group, 11/10/2019, p. 18, [url](#)

¹⁹⁷ Bellingcat, 03/06/2019, [url](#)

¹⁹⁸ Reuters, 20/06/2019, [url](#)

¹⁹⁹ Kurdistan 24, 18/05/2019, [url](#); Rudaw, 25/05/2019, [url](#)

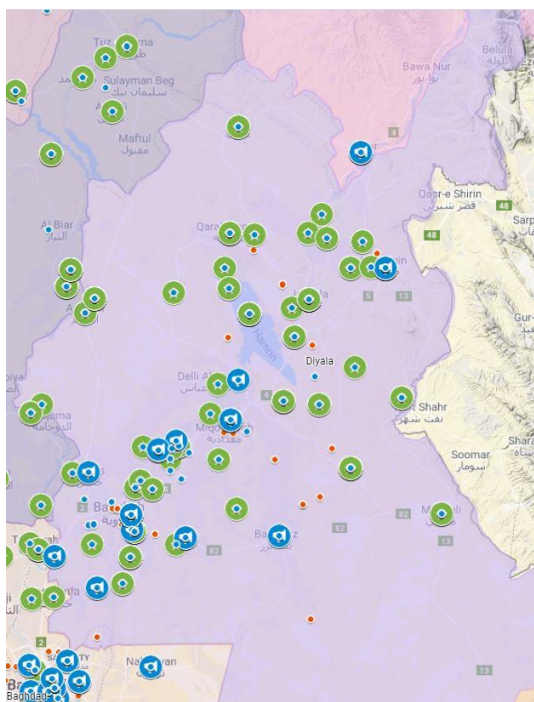
²⁰⁰ Carnegie Middle East Center, 26/09/2019, [url](#)

²⁰¹ Reuters, 02/10/2019, [url](#)

²⁰² ISHM, 23/01/2020, [url](#)

²⁰³ See list of incidents below

²⁰⁴ The New York Times, 04/09/2019, [url](#)

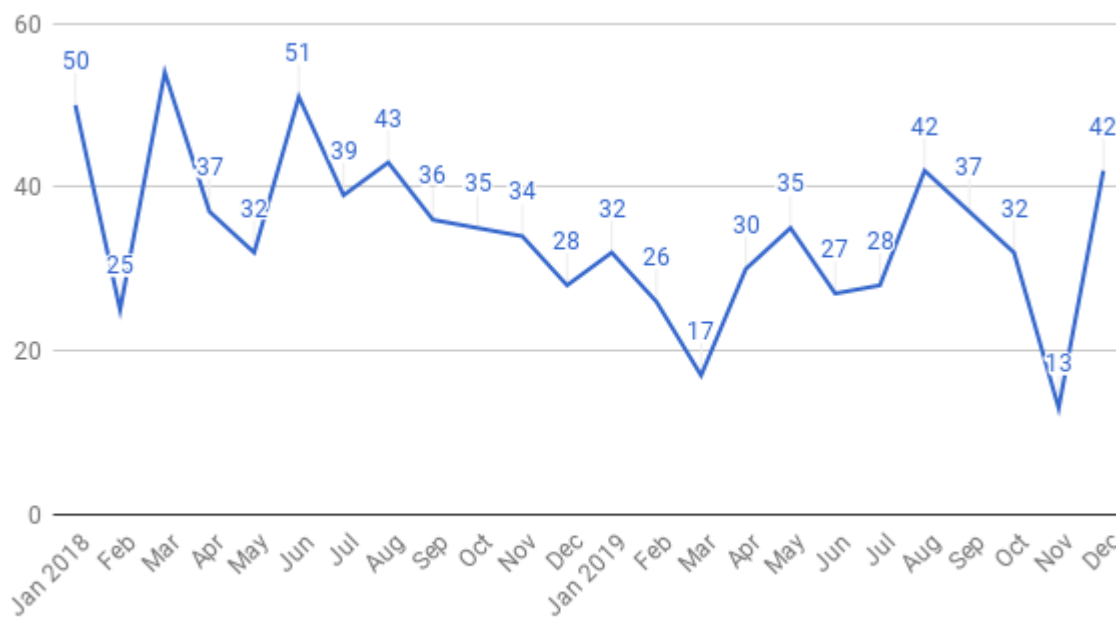


EPIC, attacks with explosives, 28/02/2019-16/01/2020; ACLED, all incidents, 01/01/2019 - 31/01/2020 (red dots = EPIC, green symbols = ACLED, attacks by ISIS, blue megaphone = demonstrations, blue dots = all events recorded by ACLED) ²⁰⁵

The number of incidents per month is recorded by Joel Wing of Musings on Iraq. He claims that Diyala was the province where ISIS was most active in 2019. Although the number of bomb attacks in 2019 fell compared to 2018, ISIS launched more attacks on the checkpoints of the Iraqi security forces in 2019 than in the previous year.²⁰⁶ The total number of incidents in Diyala fell slightly:

²⁰⁵ EPIC, 22/01/2020, [url](#); ACLED, compilation by Cedoca on Google Maps, [url](#)

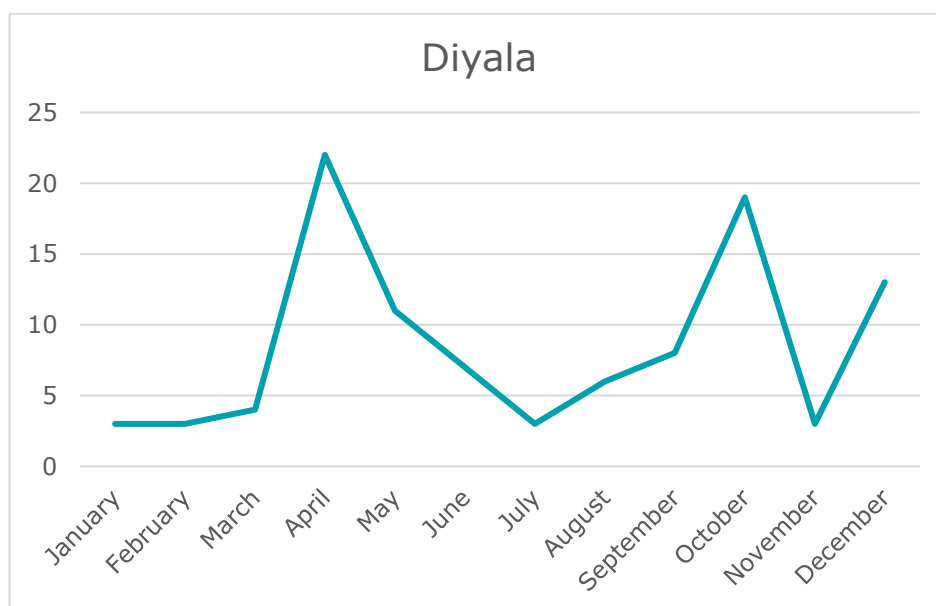
²⁰⁶ Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#)



Attacks Diyala 2018-19

Musings on Iraq, Islamic State Makes Its Return In December 2019, 06/01/2020 ²⁰⁷

The number of civilian fatalities identified by Musings on Iraq in Diyala in 2019 ranges from 3 to 22 per month:



²⁰⁷ Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#)

Wing, J., Musings on Iraq, Iraqi Deaths, Diyala²⁰⁸

According to the UN Security Council, ISIS terror cells still carry out asymmetric attacks on military and civilian targets in the province of Diyala.²⁰⁹ According to UNHCR, state authority in the province of Diyala has not been fully restored outside the urban areas.²¹⁰ ISIS retains freedom of movement especially in rural and desert areas, where the Iraqi security services have a limited presence and where ISIS previously exercised territorial control. The terrorist organisation is primarily active at night, carrying out assassinations and abductions of local leaders and attacks with IEDs on military and civilian targets, inter alia.²¹¹

According to the Institute for the Study of War, the river valley of the Diyala, a tributary of the Tigris in the province of the same name, forms a region where ISIS is still supported by the local population. From Kirkuk, ISIS appears to have brought fighters to this area between Muqadiya, Khanaqin and Lake Hamrin. ISIS has safe houses in the vicinity of Lake Hamrin, among other places.²¹² ISIS is also expanding its field of operations to the south of the city of Baquba.²¹³ In the Hamrin Mountains, ISIS has built a permanent infrastructure consisting of hideouts, training camps and its own courts, according to ISW.²¹⁴ ISIS has also built a tunnel network in the Hamrin Mountains, and has weapons arsenals there.²¹⁵ In the Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress of November 2019, the US Department of Defense reported that the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) were struggling to maintain territorial control in regions where ISIS continues to be supported by the local population.²¹⁶ In addition, the ISF's operations in Diyala are being contained as the province borders Iran.²¹⁷ The Shia militias are attempting to take control of strategic border crossings, and in Diyala this is mainly Badr.²¹⁸

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), ISIS has retreated to so-called ungoverned spaces, such as the Hamrin Mountains in Diyala, where it is building a network. At the same time, ISIS is undermining limited state authority in the region by assassinating pro-government village mayors and tribal leaders, as well as carrying out attacks on ISF checkpoints in the immediate vicinity. Within these ungoverned spaces, ISIS finances its operations through kidnappings, extortion, carjackings and robberies. This creates a negative spiral in which the local population becomes isolated and turns away from the Iraqi government.²¹⁹ In this context, SIPRI notes that the retreat of the peshmerga troops from the disputed territories in October 2017 had a negative impact on the security situation.²²⁰

International Review reports that the Iraqi army and police are too understaffed and unprepared to definitively defeat ISIS in Diyala. The PMF are also distrusted by the local population. This is why many local militias are established in this province. According to some sources contacted by International

²⁰⁸ Musings on Iraq, undated, [url](#), compilation by Cedoca

²⁰⁹ UN Security Council, 22/11/2019, p. 5, [url](#) ; UN Security Council, 05/08/2019, p. 4, [url](#); Al-Monitor, 08/06/2019, [url](#)

²¹⁰ UNHCR, 12/11/2019, p. 113, [url](#)

²¹¹ UNHCR, 12/11/2019, pp. 16-17, [url](#)

²¹² ISW, 07/03/2019, [url](#)

²¹³ ISW, 07/03/2019, [url](#)

²¹⁴ ISW, 07/03/2019, [url](#)

²¹⁵ Institute for the Study of War, 30/06/2019, p. 21, [url](#)

²¹⁶ Inspector General - Department of Defense (USA), 19/11/2019, p. 10, [url](#)

²¹⁷ Inspector General - Department of Defense (USA), 19/11/2019, p. 49, [url](#)

²¹⁸ Inspector General - Department of Defense (USA), 19/11/2019, p. 54, [url](#)

²¹⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 12/04/2019, [url](#)

²²⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 12/04/2019, [url](#)

Review, the return of the peshmerga troops to Diyala would improve the security situation in the region.²²¹

Overview of security incidents in Diyala in 2019 and 2020 with civilian fatalities, by ACLED²²²

Date	District	Location	Source	Notes	Fat.
05/02/2019	Muqdadiyah	Qaryat al Mukhaysah	Xinhua	On Feb 05, a child was shot dead by IS militants near his home in al Mukhaysah village in Diyala province.	1
27/02/2019	Baquba	Al Jadidah	Xinhua	On Feb 27, 2 villagers were killed and 4 were wounded by suspected IS mortar shelling that landed on houses in al-Jadida Village to the south of Baquba city.	2
28/02/2019	Muqdadiyah	Buhriz	Yaqein	On Feb 28, 2 children were killed and 3 other civilians were injured when unidentified mortar shells fell on the outskirts of Buhriz, south of Baquba city.	2
19/03/2019	Muqdadiyah	Buhriz	Yaqein	On Mar 19, 2 children herding sheep were killed by an unidentified IED explosion in the Buhriz region of Diyala province, killing both of them.	2
03/04/19	Muqdadiyah	Al Wajihyah	National Iraqi News Agency	As reported on Apr 03, unidentified armed men assassinated a government employee after storming his house in Wajihya district northeast of Baquba.	1
05/04/19	Muqdadiyah	Buhriz	Yaqein	As reported on Apr 05, a farmer and his son were killed by the explosion of an unidentified explosive device on the outskirts of Buhriz, south of Baqubah city.	2
10/04/19	Baquba	Al Abbarah	Iraq News Gazette	As reported on Apr 10, a farmer was killed in the explosion of an unidentified IED at the gate of an agricultural grove in the village of Al-Hadd al-Akhdhar in the direction of Al-Abbara district northeast of Baquba.	1
14/04/19	Baquba	Baquba	Rudaw	As reported on Apr 14, IS militants published a video on Telegram appearing to depict the execution of Sunni militiamen and village chiefs accused of passing on information about militant activities to security forces, the alleged Mukhtar of the village of Bahiza al Kabira in Diyala, is executed as well as 8 other captives.	9
14/04/19	Baquba	Khan Bani Saad	Al Maloomah	On Apr 14, unidentified armed men opened fire at an associate of the Ministry of Defense on the highway	1

²²¹ International Review, 22/03/2019, [url](#)

²²² ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#)

				near Khan Bani Saad district, killing him immediately.	
17/04/19	Baquba	Baquba	Al Sumaria TV	On Apr 17, an unidentified bomb blast killed 1 civilian east of Baqubah city in Diyala province.	1
23/04/19	Baquba	Baquba	National Iraqi News Agency	As reported on Apr 23, unidentified armed men shot and killed an off duty and unarmed soldier near his home in al-Qaton al-Razi area west of Baquba.	1
23/04/19	Muqdadiyah	Abu Saida	Al Maloomah	On Apr 23, unidentified armed men in a vehicle opened fire at an employee in the Ministry of Municipalities while he was coming out of his home in Abu Saida in Diyala province.	1
24/04/19	Baquba	Baquba	Yaqein	On Apr 24, unidentified armed men shot at an off duty and unarmed soldier near his home in the western neighborhoods of Baqubah city, killing him immediately.	1
27/04/19	Muqdadiyah	Qaryat al Mukhaysah	Sotaliraq; Basnews	On Apr 27, IS militants attacked al Mukhaysah village on the outskirts of Abu Saida, killing 1 civilian farmer and injuring another.	1
04/05/2019	Muqdadiyah	Qaryat al Mukhaysah	National Iraqi News Agency	On May 4, two unidentified explosive devices exploded simultaneously near a residential house in Al-Mukhisa village in the Waqf basin northeast of Baquba, killing a young man and wounding his father and a woman.	1
12/05/2019	Khanaqin	Khanaqin	NRT News	On May 12, a group of IS militants attacked Habib Abdalla village in Khanaqin, killing 2 members of the Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party (KSDP).	2
17/05/2019	Khanaqin	Khanaqin	National Iraqi News Agency	On May 17, a farmer was killed by the explosion of an unidentified IED near Yusuf Bek village in the outskirts of Khanaqin district northeast of Baquba.	1
17/05/2019	Khanaqin	Khanaqin	National Iraqi News Agency	On May 17, the explosion of an unidentified IED near the village of Mubarak, on the outskirts of Khanaqin district northeast of Baquba, killed a civilian near the scene of the explosion.	1
30/05/2019	Muqdadiyah	Abu Saida	Al Sumaria TV	On May 30, an unidentified IED explosion, followed by an armed attack in Abu Saida left 6 civilians killed and 4 others injured.	6
30/05/2019	Muqdadiyah	Abu Saida	National Iraqi News Agency	On May 30, 1 civilian was killed and 4 others were injured by the explosion of an unidentified bomb in the vicinity of the village of Shikhi in Abu Saiyda, northeast of Baquba.	1
01/06/2019	Muqdadiyah	Abu Saida	Xinhua	On June 01, 3 civilians were killed unidentified gunmen in a village near the town of Abu Saida.	3

10/06/2019	Baquba	Al Husseinia	Al Sumaria TV	Reported on 10 06 2019, an unidentified armed man shot and killed a civilian, in Al Husseinia of Baquba district, Diyala.	1
11/06/2019	Muqdadiyah	Abu Saida	Iraq News Gazette; National Iraqi News Agency	On 11 06 2019, an IED planted by an unidentified armed group killed 1 farmer, in Abu Saida of Muqdadiyah district, Diyala.	1
15/06/2019	Balad Ruz	An Nada	Nashir	On June 15, IS militants reportedly captured and killed a "spy" for the military after raiding his home. He was shot and killed in al Nada area, east of Baladruz.	1
23/06/2019	Muqdadiyah	Al-Muqdadiya	National Iraqi News Agency	On June 23, unidentified armed men opened fire at a farmer near a grove in the outskirts of Muqdadiya district northeast of Baquba, killing him instantly.	1
30/06/2019	Khanaqin	Jalawla	National Iraqi News Agency	On June 30, an unidentified IED exploded near an agricultural grove on the outskirts of Jalawla, killing a farmer and wounding another one.	1
07/07/2019	Muqdadiyah	Qaryat al Mukhaysah	Xinhua	On July 7, 1 civilian was killed when IS militants opened fire on the residents of the village of Mkeisa.	1
21/07/2019	Muqdadiyah	Qaryat al Islah	Xinhua; Al Nabaa	On July 21, an IS planted IED exploded at an orchard on the edges of Islah village, eastern Diyala, killing 1 civilian and injuring 3 others (claimed by IS to have been TMF fighters).	1
08/08/19	Muqdadiyah	Al-Muqdadiya	National Iraqi News Agency; Al Maloomah	As reported on Aug 08, a civilian was killed and another was injured by the fall of six unidentified mortar shells on al-Mayah at the outskirts of Muqdadiya district northeast of Baquba.	1
23/08/2019	Baquba	Baquba	Telegram	On Aug 23, IS militants shot and killed 1 Shia civilian by sniping and another was injured in Abadah (Ibadah) village in the district of Baquba.	1
01/09/2019	Baquba	Al Abbarah	National Iraqi News Agency	On Sept 1, the explosion of an unidentified IED reportedly killed 1 farmer near an agricultural grove on the outskirts of Al-Abbara northeast of Baquba.	1
04/09/2019	Baquba	Al Abbarah	Liveuamap; National Iraqi News Agency; Twitter	On Sept 4, the explosion of an unidentified IED reportedly killed 1 farmer near an agricultural grove on the outskirts of Al-Abbara northeast of Baquba.	1
28/09/2019	Muqdadiyah	Qaryat al Mukhaysah	Basnews	On Sept 28, Iraqi forces shot and killed 3 Kurdish civilians near Mukhaysah village in Diyala province.	3
10/10/2019	Khanaqin	Khanaqin	Xinhua	On Oct 10, IS militant snipers shot and killed 3 civilians and injured 4 others in a village in Khanaqin district.	3

24/10/2019	Muqdadiyah	Abu Saida	Xinhua; Anadolu Agency	On Oct 24, suspected IS militants shot dead the head of Abu Saida town council, his son and a civilian accompanying them in the town's center, before fleeing the scene.	3
24/10/2019	Khanaqin	Jalawla	NRT News	On Oct 24, suspected IS militants attacked a house in Arab Sulayman in Diyala's Sheikh Baba area in Jalawla sub-district, killing 1 and injuring 2 others.	1
24/10/2019	Khanaqin	Jalawla	Sotaliraq	On Oct 24, IS militants raided the home of Iraqi military personnel, and did not find him and killed 1 of his children and injured 3 others in the Jalawla area in Khanaqin district.	1
24/10/2019	Muqdadiyah	Abu Saida	Xinhua; Anadolu Agency	On Oct 24, the mayor of Abu Saida town was shot and killed by a former bodyguard of his who invited the mayor to his house for lunch in the town.	1
24/10/2019	Muqdadiyah	Abu Saida	Anadolu Agency; Xinhua	On Oct 24, suspected IS gunmen opened fire on the director of the national identity cards office of Abu Saida, killed him and fled the scene.	1
28/10/2019	Muqdadiyah	Al-Muqdadiya	Al Sumaria TV	On October 28, an employee of the Ministry of Trade was killed along with his daughter after an unidentified IED roadside bomb explosion hit their car on the outskirts of al-Muqdadiya district in Diyala province.	2
28/10/2019	Baquba	Baquba	Telegram	On October 28, Islamic State fighters killed a Shia civilian in the village of Ibada, west of Baquba in Diyala province.	1
04/11/2019	Khanaqin	Shafiq Aziz Agha	Baghdad Today	As reported on November 4, Islamic State fighters killed a young man and kidnapped another in Shafiq village near Khanaqin in Diyala province.	1
01/12/2019	Balad Ruz	Nahiyat Kanan	Al Maloomah	Reported on 01 December 2019, unidentified gunmen shot and killed a civilian, while driving his car, in Nhiyat Kanan.	1
04/12/2019	Balad Ruz	Mandali	Al Ghad Press	Reported on 04 December 2019, unknown gunmen shot and killed a village elder in Mandali of Diyala province.	1
07/12/2019	Khalis	Al Azim	Baghdad Post	Reported on 07 December 2019, Islamic State militants shot and killed 1 farmer, in Al Azim village.	1
12/12/2019	Muqdadiyah	Buhriz	Al Maloomah; Al Sumaria TV; Anadolu Agency	On Dec 12, an explosive device placed under a motorcycle exploded leaving 2 civilians killed and 4 others injured in Buhriz area in Diyala province.	2
17/12/2019	Balad Ruz	Mandali	Al Ghad Press	On Dec 17, a retired teacher was killed by unidentified armed men outside his	1

				home in al-Asri neighborhood in Mandali, Diyala province.	
17/12/2019	Muqdadiyah	Abu Saida	Al Maloomah	On Dec 17, a civilian was killed and his son was injured by the explosion of an unidentified IED in central Abu Saida in Diyala province.	1
17/12/2019	Muqdadiyah	Abu Saida	Al Maloomah	On Dec 17, unidentified gunfire targeting a vehicle carrying civilians on the outskirts of Abu Saida left 1 civilian killed and a woman injured.	1
18/12/2019	Muqdadiyah	Abu Saida	Al Maloomah	On Dec 18, a civilian was killed by unidentified gunfire near his home in central Abu Saida, northeast Baqubah.	1
23/12/2019	Muqdadiyah	Abu Saida	Baghdad Today	On Dec 23, a civilian was killed by unidentified gunfire shots near his home in Abu Saida, Diyala province.	1
24/12/2019	Baquba	Al Abbarah	Al Ghad Press	On Dec 24, a civilian was killed by unidentified gunfire in a garden on the outskirts of Al Abbarah in Diyala province.	1
27/12/2019	Muqdadiyah	Al-Muqdadiya	Al Ghad Press	On Dec 27, a civilian was killed by unidentified gunfire in al-Muqdadiya district in front of his home.	1
02/01/2020	Muqdadiyah	Abu Saida	Baghdad Today	On Jan 2, an unidentified hand grenade exploded near a civilian home in Abu Saida killing a civilian and injuring 2 others.	1
09/01/2020	Balad Ruz	Mandali	Al Ghad Press	On 09 January, 2020, an unknown armed group killed a customs officer in Mandali crossing point with Iran, near Mandali town.	1
09/01/2020	Baquba	Baquba	Al Ghad Press	On 09 January, 2020, a grenade thrown by an unknown armed group, exploded targeting a house in Baquba city in Diyala province, killing 1 child.	1
12/01/2020	Muqdadiyah	Buhriz	Al Ghad Press	On 12 January, 2020, an unknown armed group opened fire on a civilian (car gallery owner) in Buhriz in Diyala province killing him.	1
18/01/2020	Baquba	Al Husseiniya	Al Sumaria TV	On 18 January, 2020, an unknown armed group attacked and killed a civilian in Al Husseiniya city, using silenced guns.	1
27/01/2020	Muqdadiyah	Qaryat al Mukhaysah	Al Ghad Press	On Jan 27, an unidentified IED exploded killing an off duty officer near a checkpoint in al Mukhaysah village's orchards, northeast Diyala province.	1

Overview of security incidents in Diyala in 2019 and 2020, by EPIC

- On 11 February 2019, ISIS fighters killed a law enforcement officer at a checkpoint in Khanaqin near the Iraqi-Iranian border.²²³
- On 19 February 2019, the Iraqi Air Force carried out a bombardment of an ISIS hideout north of Baquba. Four ISIS fighters were killed.²²⁴
- On 27 February 2019, two civilians were killed in a mortar attack on the Buhrez suburb of Baquba.²²⁵
- On 6 March 2019, a police officer was killed in a roadside bomb explosion in the village of al-Tawakol, 40 kilometres northwest of Baquba.²²⁶
- On 13 March 2019, a civilian was killed in a mortar attack on a residential district in Qara Tapah. Five others were injured.²²⁷
- On 19 March 2019, two children were killed in a bomb explosion in the village of Tarfaya, located in Southern Diyala.²²⁸
- On 26 March 2019 in Qarah Tapah, northeast of the province of Diyala, an Iraqi soldier was shot dead by an IS fighter.²²⁹
- On 2 April 2019, aerial bombardments targeted ISIS hideouts in the Hamrin mountains. Four ISIS fighters were reportedly killed.²³⁰
- On 3 April 2019, a man opened fire in the village of Wadi al-Awsay. One policeman was killed, three others were injured.²³¹
- On 26 April 2019, ISIS fighters attacked the village of Beit al-Sumti, located between Muqdadhiya and Abi Saida districts. One villager was killed, two others were wounded.²³²
- On 4 May 2019, two IEDs exploded in the village of Mukhaysa, north of Diyala. One man was killed, three others were injured.²³³
- On 17 May 2019, ISIS claimed responsibility for the field fires that were started in Khanaqin. The next day, fires were started again.²³⁴
- On 19 May 2019, seven PMF militia members were killed in a roadside explosion near the city of Balad Ruz. 26 others were injured.²³⁵
- On 11 June 2019, a farmer was killed in a roadside bomb explosion in the village of al-Mukhaysa.²³⁶
- On 3 July 2019, a labourer was killed in a grenade explosion at a market in al-Wajihija.²³⁷
- On 12 July 2019, four PMF militiamen were killed by an IED in Sa'diya.²³⁸
- On 21 July 2019, a civilian was killed in an IED explosion in the village of al-Islah, located in Jalwala.²³⁹
- On 25 July 2019, ISIS fighters attacked members of the PMF in the village of Shafiq, near Khanaqin. One militia member of the PMF was killed.²⁴⁰

²²³ EPIC, 14/02/2019, [url](#)

²²⁴ EPIC, 21/02/2019, [url](#)

²²⁵ Iraqi News, 27/02/2019, [url](#)

²²⁶ EPIC, 07/03/2019, [url](#)

²²⁷ EPIC, 14/03/2019, [url](#)

²²⁸ EPIC, 21/03/2019, [url](#)

²²⁹ EPIC, 28/03/2019, [url](#)

²³⁰ EPIC, 04/04/2019, [url](#)

²³¹ EPIC, 04/04/2019, [url](#)

²³² EPIC, 02/05/2019, [url](#)

²³³ EPIC, 2019, 09/05/2019, [url](#)

²³⁴ EPIC, 23/05/2019, [url](#)

²³⁵ Iraqi News, 19/05/2019, [url](#); EPIC, 23/05/2019, [url](#)

²³⁶ EPIC, 13/06/2019, [url](#)

²³⁷ EPIC, 04/07/2019, [url](#)

²³⁸ EPIC, 18/07/2019, [url](#)

²³⁹ EPIC, 25/07/2019, [url](#)

²⁴⁰ EPIC, 25/07/2019, [url](#)

- On 31 July 2019, there were clashes between ISIS fighters and Kurdish security forces in the village of Kulajo, located in the Kifri district. Between five and eight people were killed, including three members of the Kurdish security forces.²⁴¹
- On 2 August 2019, a farmer was killed in an IED explosion in the village of Islah, located in Jalawla district.²⁴²
- On 4 August 2019, an IED killed an Iraqi soldier south of Diyala. Two others were injured.²⁴³
- On 7 August 2019, four ISIS fighters were killed in a security operation east of Baquba.²⁴⁴
- On 8 August 2019, two civilians were killed in a mortar attack on the village of Abu Nazar.²⁴⁵
- On 11 August 2019, a soldier died in an IED explosion near Jalawla.²⁴⁶
- On 14 August 2019, four ISIS fighters were killed in an aerial bombardment in the Hamrin mountains.²⁴⁷
- On 22 August 2019, ISIS fighters in Qara Tapah attacked positions held by the ISF. Six of them were killed.²⁴⁸
- On 24 August 2019, a police officer was killed in an attack by ISIS on a checkpoint in Hashimiyat, near Baquba.²⁴⁹
- On 26 August 2019, a policeman was killed in an IED explosion near Gatoun, west of Baquba.²⁵⁰
- On 26 August 2019, ISIS fighters attacked a checkpoint near Khanaqin. Two soldiers were killed.²⁵¹
- On 30 August 2019, a civilian was shot dead in Qara Tappah.²⁵²
- In August 2019, an explosion occurred in a weapons storage facility of the PMF in Ashraf camp, located in Diyala. The Israeli Air Force may have been responsible.²⁵³
- On 9 September 2019, fifteen ISIS fighters were killed in bombing raids on ISIS hideouts in Mtaibijah, located on the border between Diyala and Salah al-Din.²⁵⁴
- On 11 September 2019, a soldier was killed in an attack with an IED in Nida, east of Baquba.²⁵⁵
- On 11 September 2019, a sniper killed an Iraqi soldier at a checkpoint in the Dawaleeb region, northeast of Baquba.²⁵⁶
- On 23 September 2019, a bomb expert was killed in an IED explosion near Baquba.²⁵⁷
- On 24 September 2019, a PMF militia member was killed in an ISIS attack on a checkpoint in the Bawa Mahmoud region of Khanaqin.²⁵⁸
- On 28 September 2019, ISIS attacked a military outpost near Khanaqin. Three civilians were killed.²⁵⁹

²⁴¹ EPIC, 01/08/2019, [url](#)

²⁴² EPIC, 08/08/2019, [url](#)

²⁴³ EPIC, 08/08/2019, [url](#)

²⁴⁴ EPIC, 08/08/2019, [url](#)

²⁴⁵ EPIC, 15/08/2019, [url](#)

²⁴⁶ EPIC, 15/08/2019, [url](#)

²⁴⁷ EPIC, 15/08/2019, [url](#)

²⁴⁸ EPIC, 22/08/2019, [url](#)

²⁴⁹ EPIC, 29/08/2019, [url](#)

²⁵⁰ EPIC, 29/08/2019, [url](#)

²⁵¹ EPIC, 29/08/2019, [url](#)

²⁵¹ EPIC, 05/09/2019, [url](#)

²⁵² EPIC, 05/09/2019, [url](#)

²⁵³ Al-Monitor, 23/08/2019, [url](#)

²⁵⁴ EPIC, 12/09/2019, [url](#)

²⁵⁵ EPIC, 12/09/2019, [url](#)

²⁵⁶ EPIC, 12/09/2019, [url](#)

²⁵⁷ EPIC, 26/09/2019, [url](#)

²⁵⁸ EPIC, 26/09/2019, [url](#)

²⁵⁹ EPIC, 03/10/2019, [url](#)

- On 17 October 2019, a suicide bomber from ISIS was killed in a military operation in the Hamrin Mountains.²⁶⁰
- On 18 October 2019, a sniper shot at an army camp near Buhriz, south of Baquba. One soldier was killed.²⁶¹
- On 24 October 2019, unknown gunmen killed two local officials and the mayor of the subdistrict of Abu Saida. One civilian was also killed. Following this, the governor of Diyala imposed a curfew.²⁶²
- On 24 October 2019, a teenager was killed in an ISIS attack on a village in Khanaqin.²⁶³
- On 27 October 2019, ISIS fighters launched an attack on an oil well in the Naft Khana region. PMF militia members killed three of them.²⁶⁴
- On 11 November 2019, ISIS fighters killed four soldiers and injured seven others in the district of Khanaqin.²⁶⁵
- On 12 November 2019, ten ISIS fighters were killed in a bombardment by the Iraqi Air Force in the region between Jalawla and Khanaqin.²⁶⁶
- On 1 December 2019, ISIS fighters killed a peshmerga fighter in al-Sadiyah, south of Jalawla.²⁶⁷
- On 2 December 2019, six PMF members were killed in combat with ISIS in Naft Khana.²⁶⁸
- On 3 December 2019, a PMF militia member was killed in Khanaqin.²⁶⁹
- On 4 December 2019, ISIS snipers killed a PMF militia member and three peshmergas during clashes in Kolajo, in the Kifri district.²⁷⁰
- On 5 December 2019, ISIS fighters killed a policeman in an attack on a checkpoint in the Gatoun region.²⁷¹
- On 7 December 2019, ISIS fighters killed a farmer in the subdistrict of Udham.²⁷²
- On 12 December 2019, a civilian was killed in an IED explosion in the subdistrict of Buhruz.²⁷³
- On 15 December 2019, three ISIS fighters were killed in an aerial bombardment near the village of Abu Jumaa.²⁷⁴
- On 15 December 2019, ISIS fighters attacked a tank unit of the Fifth Division of the Iraqi Army, in the village of Nawfal, located in Muqdadiya district. Two soldiers were killed.²⁷⁵
- On 15 December 2019, three soldiers were killed near Balad Ruz.²⁷⁶
- On 17 December 2019, a civilian was killed in an IED attack near a home in the subdistrict of Abu Saida.²⁷⁷
- On 19 December 2019, four people were killed in tribal clashes in Abu Saida. Two of the victims were soldiers.²⁷⁸

²⁶⁰ EPIC, 17/10/2019, [url](#)

²⁶¹ EPIC, 25/10/2019, [url](#)

²⁶² EPIC, 25/10/2019, [url](#)

²⁶³ EPIC, 31/10/2019, [url](#)

²⁶⁴ EPIC, 31/10/2019, [url](#)

²⁶⁵ EPIC, 14/11/2019, [url](#)

²⁶⁶ EPIC, 14/11/2019, [url](#)

²⁶⁷ EPIC, 05/12/2019, [url](#)

²⁶⁸ EPIC, 05/12/2019, [url](#)

²⁶⁹ EPIC, 05/12/2019, [url](#)

²⁷⁰ EPIC, 05/12/2019, [url](#)

²⁷¹ EPIC, 12/12/2019, [url](#)

²⁷² EPIC, 12/12/2019, [url](#)

²⁷³ EPIC, 19/12/2019, [url](#)

²⁷⁴ EPIC, 19/12/2019, [url](#)

²⁷⁵ EPIC, 19/12/2019, [url](#)

²⁷⁶ EPIC, 19/12/2019, [url](#)

²⁷⁷ EPIC, 19/12/2019, [url](#)

²⁷⁸ EPIC, 19/12/2019, [url](#)

- On 22 December 2019, according to the PMF, eight ISIS fighters were killed in a security operation near Khanaqin.²⁷⁹
- On 22 December 2019, a soldier was killed in an ISIS attack on a checkpoint in the subdistrict of al-Udheim.²⁸⁰
- On 30 December 2019, a soldier was killed in an attack on a checkpoint in Mandili.²⁸¹
- On 30 December 2019, unknown perpetrators killed a policeman in Khalis, north of Baquba.²⁸²
- On 2 January 2020, a police officer was killed in an ISIS attack on a checkpoint in the region of Imam Safir, district of Muqdadiya.²⁸³
- On 20 January 2020, a demonstrator was killed in Baquba during a confrontation between demonstrators and riot police over the closure of a bridge.²⁸⁴
- On 27 January 2020, a police officer was killed in an IED attack in the subdistrict of Abu Saida.²⁸⁵
- On 29 January 2020, an ISIS sniper killed an Iraqi soldier in the Buhruz region, south of Baquba.²⁸⁶

6.4. Kirkuk

6.4.1. Territorial control

In response to the Kurdish independence referendum, the Iraqi army, in cooperation with the Popular Mobilization Forces, took control of the city of Kirkuk and the other disputed territories of the province of Kirkuk in October 2017.²⁸⁷ Since then, the Iraqi government has claimed control over the entire territory of the province²⁸⁸, including the Dibis district, the subdistrict of Multaqa and the Khabbaz and Bai Hassan oil fields. According to the Iraqi army, all areas taken by the Kurdish peshmergas in June 2014 are under their control again.²⁸⁹

²⁷⁹ EPIC, 02/01/2020, [url](#)

²⁸⁰ EPIC, 02/01/2020, [url](#)

²⁸¹ EPIC, 02/01/2020, [url](#)

²⁸² EPIC, 02/01/2020, [url](#)

²⁸³ EPIC, 09/01/2020, [url](#)

²⁸⁴ EPIC, 23/01/2020, [url](#)

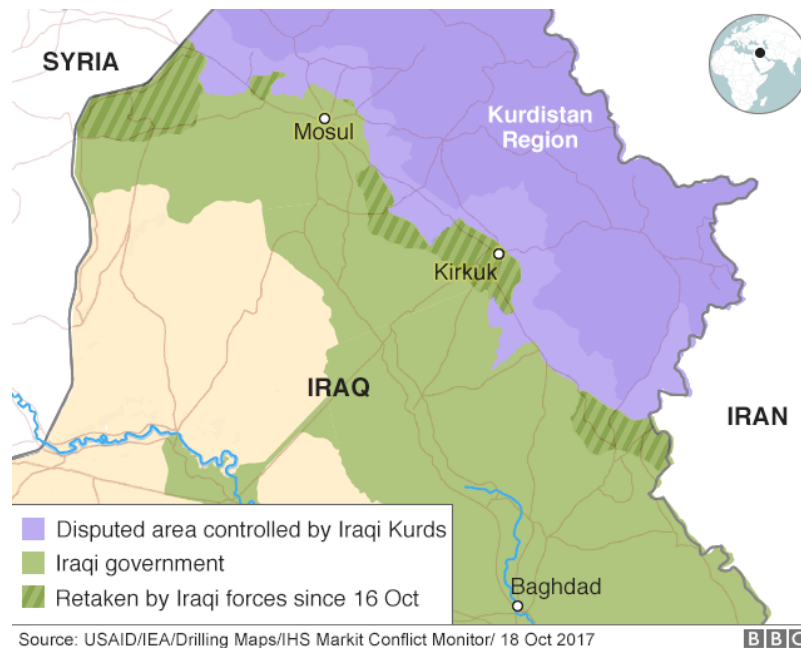
²⁸⁵ EPIC, [url](#)

²⁸⁶ EPIC, 30/01/2020, [url](#)

²⁸⁷ ICG, 14/12/2018, pp. 9-10, [url](#)

²⁸⁸ BBC, 20/10/2017, [url](#); Al Jazeera, 21/10/2017, [url](#)

²⁸⁹ BBC, 18/10/2017, [url](#)



BBC, Iraq takes disputed territories as 'Kurds withdraw to 2014 lines', 18/10/2017²⁹⁰

According to a report by the independent think tank Clingendael, administrative control over the disputed areas has become fragmented since October 2017 as security tasks are taken over by a motley of local militia, PMF and Iraqi army units.²⁹¹ The UNHCR notes that the degree of control exercised by the Iraqi authorities in the disputed territories, which were recaptured in 2017, varies. Certain areas remain de facto under the control of the Kurdish peshmergas.²⁹² For example, the city of Qara Hanjir, located east of Kirkuk city, is partly under the control of peshmergas.²⁹³ The French newspaper *Les Echos* reported that the Iraqi security forces in the remote rural areas of Kirkuk need the support of the Kurdish peshmergas in anti-terrorist operations.²⁹⁴ According to Clingendael, the Kurdish peshmergas have remained present, especially to the east of Kirkuk province, since October 2017.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁰ BBC, 18/10/2017, [url](#)

²⁹¹ Clingendael Institute, 03/07/2018, p. 9, [url](#)

²⁹² UNHCR, 12/11/2019, pp. 11-12, [url](#)

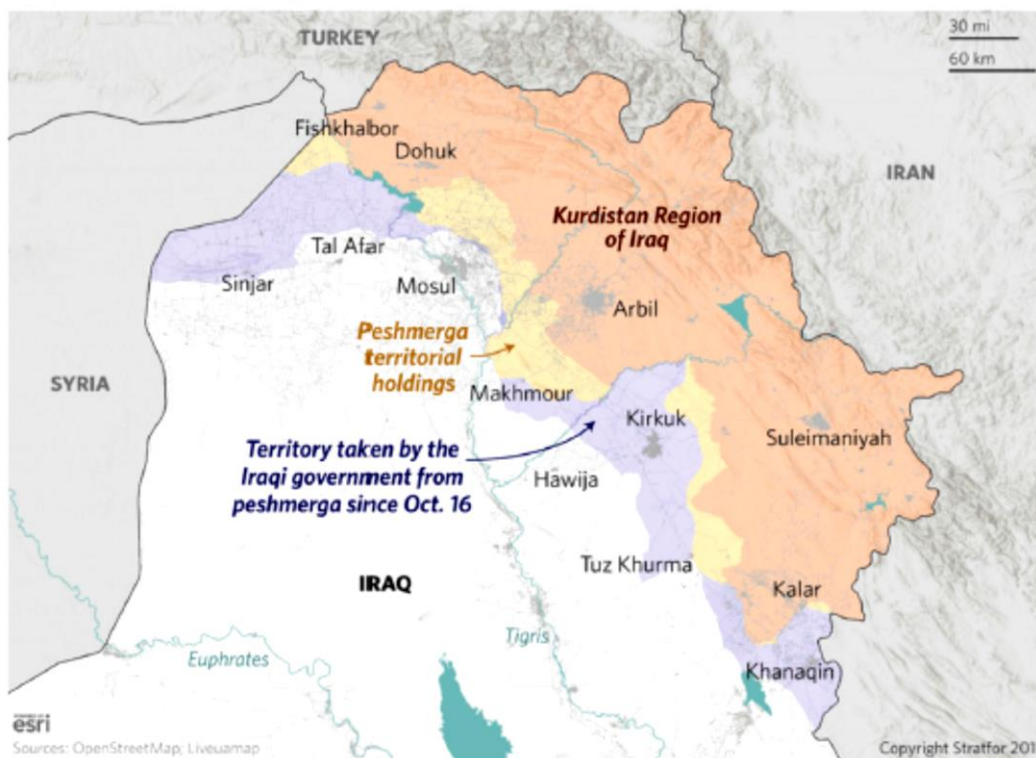
²⁹³ Rudaw, 27/01/2020, [url](#)

²⁹⁴ Les Echos, 05/06/2019, [url](#)

²⁹⁵ Clingendael Institute, 03/07/2018, p. 10, [url](#)

Baghdad's Territorial Gains Since Oct. 16

Since Oct. 16, military forces deployed by Iraq's central government in Baghdad have reclaimed infrastructure and territory under Kurdish control in territory disputed by Baghdad and Arbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Regional Government.



Clingendael Institute, *In the Eye of the Storm? – (In)stability in Western Iraqi Kurdistan*, 03/07/2018²⁹⁶

The lack of coordination between the Iraqi and Kurdish governments over law enforcement in the disputed territories provides ISIS with an opportunity to strike.²⁹⁷ In January 2019, the Iraqi government pulled back the Counter Terrorism Service from Kirkuk. Following this, Kurdish peshmerga fighters returned to the disputed territories north of the province. According to Al-Monitor, these troop movements resulted in a rapprochement between the Iraqi and Kurdish governments.²⁹⁸ Further consultations between the two authorities on the security vacuum that has arisen in the disputed territories also include the possible return of peshmerga troops to the city of Kirkuk. The news site Kirkuk Now reported that during the course of 2019, Kurdish peshmergas and the Iraqi army set up a number of joint security operations to contain ISIS in the disputed territories.²⁹⁹ In June 2019, The Economist reported that the Iraqi authorities in the city of Kirkuk were considering closer cooperation with the Kurdish security forces. The Kurdish security service *Asayesh* appeared to be reactivating its networks in the city. According to The Economist, the north of the province of Kirkuk still belongs to the Kurdish sphere of influence.³⁰⁰ In October 2019, the KDP's Kirkuk branch declared that it had

²⁹⁶ Clingendael Institute, 03/07/2018, p. 10, [url](#)

²⁹⁷ ICG, 11/10/2019, pp. 6-7, [url](#); Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 11/01/2019, [url](#); Rudaw, 21/05/2019, [url](#); UNHCR, 12/11/2019, pp. 16-17, [url](#)

²⁹⁸ Al-Monitor, 28/02/2019, [url](#)

²⁹⁹ Kirkuk Now, 11/07/2019, [url](#)

³⁰⁰ The Economist, 15/06/2019, [url](#)

received permission from the Iraqi and Kurdish governments to return to the city of Kirkuk. However, due to the presence of PMF, the party is postponing its return to Kirkuk.³⁰¹

According to Reuters, short-term territorial control is not the aim of ISIS in Kirkuk Province. Nonetheless, the terrorist organisation is trying to undermine state authority in the province via hit-and-run attacks.³⁰² To this end, ISIS is using guerrilla techniques, such as assassinations and kidnappings.³⁰³ Southwest of the province of Kirkuk, the Hamrin mountain range serves as a safe haven for ISIS.³⁰⁴ Despite the military operations being set up³⁰⁵, state authority in this region remains limited and ISIS maintains an underground network there. ISIS primarily conducts its activities at night, and the local population is subjected to kidnappings, extortion and robberies.³⁰⁶

6.4.2. General situation

According to the USDOS, ethnic-sectarian tensions in Kirkuk province have increased since the Iraqi central government regained control of the region in October 2017. The Kurdish, Turkmen, Sunni-Arab and Kakai minorities experience discrimination and, in some cases, violence on the part of government forces, in particular by the predominantly Shia Popular Mobilization Forces.³⁰⁷ The future of the disputed territories and the distribution of oil wealth from the region remain points of contention between the Iraqi and Kurdish governments.³⁰⁸ A political dispute between the Kurdish parties KDP and PUK has prevented a new governor from being appointed in the province.³⁰⁹ Kurdish parties accuse the provisional governor of the province, Rakan Al-Jabouri, of favouring the Arab population.³¹⁰

The Kurdish population of Kirkuk in particular is dissatisfied with the power grab by the Iraqi authorities in October 2017. They attribute the security incidents in the province to the failed administration of the Iraqi government. Additionally, the investments for the reconstruction appear to mainly benefit Kirkuk, to the detriment of the other provincial towns and rural areas.³¹¹ According to the Turkmen community in the province, investments in the predominantly Turkmen residential areas, such as the city of Altun Kupri, are inadequate.³¹²

In May 2019, Arab attackers attempted to expel the Kurdish population from a number of villages in the district of Dibis.³¹³ The Iraqi army allows these attacks to go unpunished. The Baghdad-appointed temporary governor of Kirkuk, Rakan al-Jabouri, justifies these attacks by claiming that the inhabitants of the villages are Iranian Kurds. In the provinces of Kirkuk and Diyala, more than a thousand hectares of farmland of Kurdish farmers have been set on fire. Kurdish politicians refer to a policy of Arabisation in the region.³¹⁴

³⁰¹ Rudaw, 16/10/2019, [url](#)

³⁰² Reuters, 07/05/2019, [url](#)

³⁰³ Reuters, 24/07/2018, [url](#)

³⁰⁴ CTC, 10/09/2018, [url](#)

³⁰⁵ Reuters, 14/04/2019, [url](#); Rudaw, 11/04/2019, [url](#)

³⁰⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 12/04/2019, [url](#)

³⁰⁷ USDOS, 13/03/2019, [url](#)

³⁰⁸ Al-Monitor, 14/08/2019, [url](#)

³⁰⁹ The Washington Institute, 30/05/2019, [url](#); Al-Monitor, 26/06/2019, [url](#)

³¹⁰ ICG, 14/12/2018, [url](#), pp. 10-11; Rudaw, 23/12/2019, [url](#)

³¹¹ The New Humanitarian, 26/09/2019, [url](#)

³¹² The New Humanitarian, 26/09/2019, [url](#)

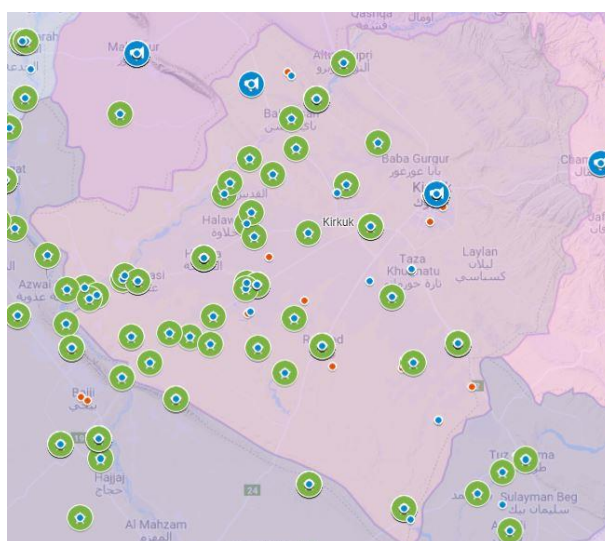
³¹³ According to a local politician the villages are Palkana, Sarbashakh, Shanagha, Darband, Jastan, Talhalala, Jastuma, Chard, Gabalaka, Kharaba, Qoch, Qaplan, Saralu, Lheban, Sargaran, Dawdgruga and Sequchan.

³¹⁴ The Washington Institute, 31/05/2019, [url](#); Rudaw, 14/05/2019, [url](#); EPIC, 23/05/2019, [url](#)

During the course of 2019, a number of protest demonstrations took place in Kirkuk³¹⁵, albeit on a much smaller scale than in Baghdad and the Shia south of Iraq.³¹⁶

6.4.3. Security incidents

A map of Kirkuk showing the incidents involving explosives recorded by EPIC from March 2019 to January 2020, and all incidents recorded by ACLED from 1 January 2019 to 31 January 2020, shows the following image:



EPIC, attacks with explosives, 28/02/2019-16/01/2020; ACLED, all incidents, 01/01/2019 - 31/01/2020 (red dots = EPIC, green symbols = ACLED, attacks by ISIS, blue megaphone = demonstrations, blue dots = all events recorded by ACLED)³¹⁷

The security incidents that occurred in Kirkuk during the period under study primarily occurred in the Hawija and Daquq districts. Besides a number of air strikes by the Iraqi Air Force and the international coalition on possible ISIS hideouts, there were anti-terrorist operations by the ISF and PMF against ISIS, as well as attacks by the terrorist organisation on the Iraqi Security Forces and civilians.³¹⁸

The number of incidents per month is recorded by Joel Wing of Musings on Iraq.³¹⁹ While in 2018 an increase in the number of security incidents was observed in Kirkuk province³²⁰, violence in the region fell in 2019:

³¹⁵ Al-Monitor, 15/10/2019, [url](#)

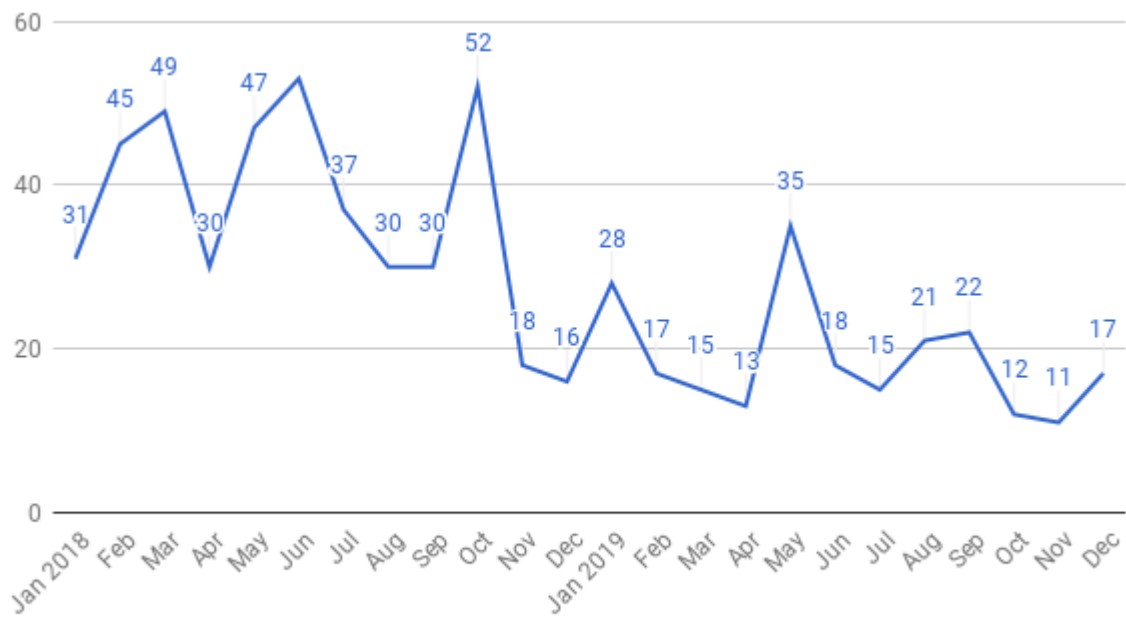
³¹⁶ Al Jazeera, 02/10/2019, [url](#)

³¹⁷ EPIC, 22/01/2020, [url](#); ACLED, compilation by Cedoca on Google Maps, [url](#)

³¹⁸ See list of incidents below

³¹⁹ Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#)

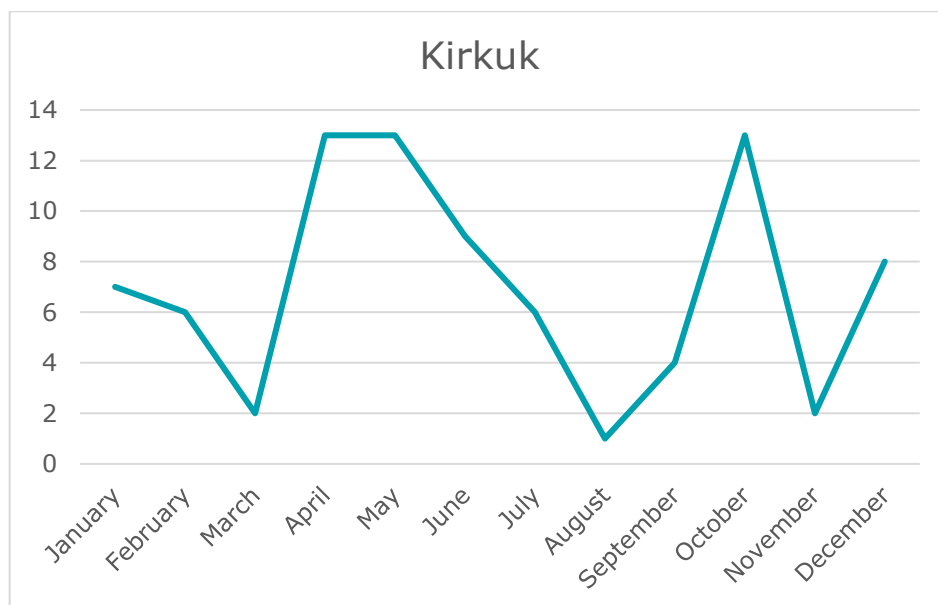
³²⁰ Center for Strategic and International Studies, 30/11/2018, p. 4, [url](#)



Attacks Kirkuk 2018-19

Musings on Iraq, Islamic State Makes Its Return In December 2019, 06/01/2020 ³²¹

The number of civilian fatalities identified by Musings on Iraq in Kirkuk in 2019 ranges from 2 to 13 per month:



³²¹ Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#)

Wing, J., Musings on Iraq, Iraqi Deaths, Kirkuk³²²

Residual ISIS terror cells are still carrying out asymmetric attacks on military and civilian targets in Kirkuk province.³²³ Especially in rural and desert areas, where the Iraqi security services have a limited presence, ISIS retains operational freedom of movement. ISIS primarily carries out its activities at night in many such areas, with assassinations and abductions of local leaders and attacks with IEDs on military and civilian targets, inter alia. According to UNHCR, these activities mainly take place in regions where ISIS previously exercised territorial control.³²⁴ Especially outside the urban centres of Kirkuk, state authority has not been fully restored.³²⁵ According to The New York Times, ISIS operates in units of a dozen or so fighters, in particular in rural areas where the Iraqi security services have a weak presence and/or where it is unclear which security actors are responsible for public security.³²⁶

ICG notes that since 2017, ISIS has found it increasingly difficult to penetrate Iraqi cities. The limited number of attacks that took place in the city of Kirkuk were not claimed by ISIS. Local sources tend to attribute these attacks to political tensions or extortion by criminal organisations.³²⁷ The International Crisis Group cites the rural areas around Hawija as a region where the Iraqi security forces need the continued assistance of the international coalition to keep the resurgence of ISIS in check.³²⁸ The Institute for the Study of War has identified eleven regions in Iraq where ISIS has regrouped since 2017. In Kirkuk province, these are the rural areas in the districts of Hawija and Daquq. Attacks on the city of Kirkuk are launched from these regions.³²⁹ The local population is subjected to extortion. The fields of farmers who refuse to hand over *zakat* to ISIS are set on fire.³³⁰ According to ISW, ISIS has a hideout in the Hamrin Mountains as well as training camps and its own courts.³³¹ In the Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress of November 2019, the US Department of Defense reported that the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) were struggling to maintain territorial control in regions where ISIS continues to be supported by the local population.³³² Although ISIS is less active in Kirkuk province³³³, the ISF appears unwilling or incapable of controlling certain mountainous and desert areas there.³³⁴

In April 2019, the peace organisation PAX surveyed the population in all four districts of Kirkuk province for their opinions on the security situation in the region.³³⁵ A majority of respondents (52%) indicated that the security situation had improved over the past year.³³⁶ At the same time, about half of the respondents stated that they feared being confronted with violence in the near future. Especially in the districts of Daquq and Hawija, there is a fear of indiscriminate violence. Respondents from the largely Kurdish district of Dibis feared violence because of their ethnicity.³³⁷ Asked from which side they fear violence, 45% responded that it was criminal violence. 27% said they feared ISIS violence, a significant reduction from 2017 when 71% of respondents identified ISIS as the most feared actor of violence. The district of Hawija is the exception: respondents from this district stated that they were

³²² Musings on Iraq, undated, [url](#), compilation by Cedoca

³²³ UN Security Council, 22/11/2019, p. 5, [url](#); UN Security Council, 05/08/2019, p. 4, [url](#); Al-Monitor, 08/06/2019, [url](#)

³²⁴ UNHCR, 12/11/2019, pp. 16-17, [url](#)

³²⁵ UNHCR, 12/11/2019, p. 113, [url](#)

³²⁶ The New York Times, 19/08/2019, [url](#)

³²⁷ ICG, 11/10/2019, p. 7, [url](#)

³²⁸ ICG, 11/10/2019, p. 14, [url](#)

³²⁹ Institute for the Study of War, 30/06/2019, p. 21, [url](#)

³³⁰ Institute for the Study of War, 30/06/2019, p. 38, [url](#)

³³¹ ISW, 07/03/2019, [url](#)

³³² Inspector General - Department of Defense (USA), 19/11/2019, p. 10, [url](#)

³³³ Inspector General - Department of Defense (USA), 19/11/2019, p. 48, [url](#)

³³⁴ Inspector General - Department of Defense (USA), 19/11/2019, p. 49, [url](#)

³³⁵ For this survey, 613 inhabitants of Kirkuk province were interviewed, 52% of whom were women and 48% men.

³³⁶ PAX, 19/12/2019, p. 1, [url](#)

³³⁷ PAX, 19/12/2019, p. 3, [url](#)

particularly wary of ISIS.³³⁸ In the district of Hawija, it is mainly the relatives of Iraqi soldiers or agents who are identified as potential victims of violence. Respondents from the district of Dibis regard members of religious or ethnic minorities in particular as potential victims of violence.³³⁹ According to around half of the respondents, the police are constantly present in their region. Twenty percent of the respondents indicated that the PMF is continuously present in their region.³⁴⁰ Among respondents from Hawija, this figure is significantly higher: 80% stated that PMF is continuously present. The army also has a greater presence compared to other districts in Kirkuk.³⁴¹

Overview of security incidents in Kirkuk in 2019 and 2020 with civilian fatalities, by ACLED³⁴²

Date	District	location	Source	Notes	Fat.
1/01/2019	Kirkuk	Mullah Abdullah	Iraq News Gazette	As reported on Jan 1, an unidentified bomb exploded in Abdullah al-Yassin village, targeting a civilian vehicle and killing 1 civilian and injuring his brother who was also in the vehicle.	1
6/01/2019	Kirkuk	Kirkuk	Yaqein	On Jan 06, an unidentified IED planted roadside in one of the villages northwest of Kirkuk city killed and injured 3 others, while also causing material damages.	1
14/01/2019	Haweeja	Haweeja	Yemen News Agency SABA	On Jan 14, 1 civilian was killed by the explosion of a suspected IS IED near a car traveling in a village between the district of Hawija and Abbasi district of Kirkuk province.	1
16/01/2019	Kirkuk	Kirkuk	Yaqein	On Jan 16, unidentified armed men fired shots towards a leader of the KDP in al Musala neighborhood in Kirkuk city, killing him.	1
17/01/2019	Kirkuk	Kirkuk	Al Ghad Press	As reported on Jan 17, an unidentified IED exploded targeting a vehicle passing through Sabti neighborhood in Kirkuk city, killing 1 woman and injuring 2 other civilians.	1
18/02/2019	Kirkuk	Rashad	National Iraqi News Agency	As reported on Feb 18, an unidentified IED exploded near a village belonging to the al-Rashad area south of Kirkuk, killing a shepherd.	1
29/03/2019	Daquq	Daquq	Basnews	On Mar 29, IS militants attacked the Kurdish village Sheikh Mahmoud near Daquq in Kirkuk province,	1

³³⁸ PAX, 19/12/2019, p. 3, [url](#)

³³⁹ PAX, 19/12/2019, p. 4, [url](#)

³⁴⁰ PAX, 19/12/2019, p. 5, [url](#)

³⁴¹ PAX, 19/12/2019, p. 5, [url](#)

³⁴² ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#)

				killing a young man and injuring another.	
07/04/2019	Dibis	Dibis	National Iraqi News Agency	As reported on Apr 07, three civilians were killed at a fake checkpoint set up by IS militants near Dibis district, northwest of Kirkuk.	3
10/04/2019	Kirkuk	Mullah Abdullah	Al Sumaria TV	As reported on Apr 10, an unidentified IED explosion in Mullah Abdullah, west of Kirkuk left 2 brothers killed and their father was seriously injured.	2
10/04/19	Kirkuk	Kirkuk	Iraq News Gazette	As reported on Apr 10, a child was killed and five other civilians were wounded when an unidentified roadside bomb exploded in the village of Kawaz Arabs, within the area of Al-Multaqa west of Kirkuk.	1
08/05/2019	Kirkuk	Kirkuk	National Iraqi News Agency	As reported on May 8, an unidentified IED explosion killed a shepherd in agricultural land near the area of K-1, west of Kirkuk.	1
08/05/2019	Haweeja	Haweeja	NRT News	On May 8, a suspected IS planted bomb went off in the Multaqa sub-district, Haweeja district, Kirkuk province, and killed one civilian. Earlier in the day, another IED wounded 2 police in the same area.	1
14/05/2019	Kirkuk	Rashad	National Iraqi News Agency	As reported on May 14, IS militants detonated an explosive device at the entrance to Dhi Qar residential complex in Rashad district, south of Kirkuk, which led to the death of 1 civilian.	1
30/05/2019	Kirkuk	Kirkuk	Basnews; AP	On May 30, at least six unidentified bomb explosions hit the province of Kirkuk, resulting in the killing of 4 and the wounding of 23 (among them a police officer), IEDs as well as vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices detonated (VBIED) exploded.	4
08/06/2019	Kirkuk	Kirkuk	Al Ghad Press	On 08 09 2019, a bomb planted by an unidentified armed group killed 1 civilian, and injured 1 policeman, in Kirkuk province.	1
13/06/2019	Kirkuk	Kirkuk	Baghdad Post	Reported on 11 06 2019, unidentified armed men shot and killed a civilian, in Kirkuk city.	1
24/06/2019	Haweeja	Nahiyat Abbasi al	Liveuamap; Twitter	On June 24, IS militants killed 3 civilians in a village in Haweeja's Abbasi sub-district southwest of Kirkuk province.	3
27/06/2019	Kirkuk	Kirkuk	NRT News; Yaqein; National Iraqi News Agency	On June 27, 1 woman was killed and 28 civilians were injured by the explosion of an unidentified IED	1

				planted on a civilian bus in al Khadra area central Kirkuk.	
28/06/2019	Haweeja	Qaryat al Hawas	National Iraqi News Agency	On June 28, 2 civilians were killed and a child was wounded by IS mortar shelling of the village of Umm Qasir, in the Abbasi area west of Kirkuk.	2
10/07/2019	Kirkuk	Kirkuk	Al Mirbad; Al Maloomah; NRT News	On July 10, an unidentified IED planted on a motorbike exploded in the Domiz neighborhood of Kirkuk city killing 2 civilians and injuring 1.	2
16/07/2019	Kirkuk	Rashad	National Iraqi News Agency	As reported on July 16, IS militants broke into Ahmad al-Danuk village in Rashad district and abducted two residents of the village on charges of cooperating with the security forces, and then executed them by firing squad.	2
24/07/2019	Daquq	Daquq	Basnews	On July 25, Iraqi police forces mistakenly opened fire on a vehicle carrying 6 civilians, killing them and injuring 1 because they thought they were IS militants in the village of Zandi Mala Yousif in Daquq district.	6
26/07/2019	Daquq	Taza	Iraq News Gazette	On July 26, an unidentified IED exploded on the road between (Tal al-Jul village and Bashir village) in Taza district, killing 2 civilians and wounding seven others.	2
24/08/2019	Daquq	Daquq	Anadolu Agency	On Aug 24, IS militants targeted the PMF who were exercising in a football pitch in Kirkuk's Daquq district with a mortar attack killing 6 people and injuring 11 others.	6
10/09/2019	Kirkuk	Hameria	National Iraqi News Agency	On Sept 10, an unidentified IED planted on an agricultural road near the village of al-Humeria, south of Kirkuk, killing a shepherd.	1
26/09/2019	Kirkuk	Rashad	National Iraqi News Agency	On Sept 26, an unidentified IED exploded targeting a civilian car on the outskirts of al-Jadida village in Rashad, killing 2 civilians and wounding 1.	2
09/10/2019	Kirkuk	Kirkuk	Shafaaq News	On Oct 09, IS militants killed 5 herders on a road in Kombetlir village in al Mamdoudah area northwest Kirkuk (coded as provincial capital).	5
23/10/2019	Haweeja	Qaryat Saray al Fadl	Yaqein	On Oct 23, an IS planted IED exploded on the road leading to Saray al Fadl village in Kirkuk province, killing 3 civilians and injuring 1.	3

27/11/2019	Daquq	Daquq	Basnews	On Nov 27, suspected IS gunmen opened fire at a Peshmerga fighter when he was off duty with his wife near Daquq city killing them instantly.	2
25/12/2019	Kirkuk	Kirkuk	Liveuamap	On Dec 25, an unidentified attack by gunmen in Jalawat in Kirkuk province left 3 civilians killed	3
29/12/2019	Kirkuk	Kirkuk	Al Ghad Press	On Dec 29, unidentified armed men shot and killed a man and his son in Kirkuk province.	2
17/01/2020	Haweeja	Hamrin Mountains - Kirkuk	Liveuamap	On Jan 17, IS militants killed a civilian from the Lahib clan in the village of Rafiya on the Hamrin slopes in Kirkuk province, along the Zaghyatun river.	1

Overview of security incidents in Kirkuk in 2019 and 2020, by various sources

- On 1 February 2019, ISIS killed three civilians in the village of Haftagar, in the district of Daquq.³⁴³
- On 12 March 2019, two ISIS fighters were killed in a bombardment by the air force of the international coalition against ISIS. This air raid took place in Al-Rashad, located in the district of Hawija.³⁴⁴
- On 30 March 2019, a villager was killed when ISIS fighters shot at a group of civilians in the Kurdish village of Sheikh Mahmoud, south of Kirkuk.³⁴⁵
- On 17 April 2019, armed ISIS fighters killed a Federal Police officer in Kirkuk.³⁴⁶
- On 19 April 2019, a security operation in Hawija killed 12 members of ISIS.³⁴⁷
- On 14 May 2019, armed Arab men forced the Kurdish population of the village of Palkana, located in the district of Dibis, to leave the region. The Iraqi army was present but did nothing to protect the population.³⁴⁸
- On 15 and 16 May 2019, seven members of the Iraqi security forces were killed in Kirkuk in two hit-and-run attacks by ISIS fighters.³⁴⁹
- On 30 May 2019, five people were killed and eighteen injured in various bombings with IEDs in Kirkuk city.³⁵⁰
- On 30 May 2019, ISIS fighters shot at a number of civilians trying to extinguish a burning field in Daquq. One man was killed, at least seven others were injured.³⁵¹
- On 8 June 2019, a policeman and two civilians were killed in three attacks with IEDs in the villages of al-Gharab, Saadouniyah and al-Asiriya.³⁵²
- On 24 June 2019, ISIS fighters killed three civilians in al-Wardiya, located in the subdistrict of Abbasi in Hawija.³⁵³

³⁴³ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 06/02/2019, [url](#)

³⁴⁴ Iraqi News, 12/03/2019, [url](#)

³⁴⁵ EPIC, 04/04/2019, [url](#)

³⁴⁶ EPIC, 02/05/2019, [url](#)

³⁴⁷ EPIC, 02/05/2019, [url](#)

³⁴⁸ The Washington Institute, 31/05/2019, [url](#)

³⁴⁹ EPIC, 16/05/2019, [url](#)

³⁵⁰ Al-Monitor, 08/06/2019, [url](#) ; Al Arabiya, 30/05/2019, [url](#); Institute for the Study of War, 30/06/2019, p. 46, [url](#),

³⁵¹ EPIC, 30/05/2019, [url](#)

³⁵² EPIC, 13/06/2019, [url](#)

³⁵³ EPIC, 27/06/2019, [url](#)

- On 25 June 2019, a police officer was killed in an attack with an IED in al-Rashad, west of Kirkuk.³⁵⁴
- On 26 June 2019, a policeman was killed in an attack on a Federal Police patrol in Al-Rashad, south of Kirkuk. Earlier, an alleged leader of ISIS had been arrested in the al-Wahda district of the city of Kirkuk.³⁵⁵
- On 10 July 2019, two motorcyclists were killed by a roadside bomb near a bridge in the south of Kirkuk province.³⁵⁶
- On 16 July 2019 ISIS fighters attacked the village of Ahmad al-Danuk, located in al-Rashad. Two civilians were killed.³⁵⁷
- On 25 July 2019, ISIS launched bombs at a village in Daquq. One civilian was killed, three others were injured.³⁵⁸
- On 12 August 2019, ISIS fighters attacked a checkpoint near the village of Ali Sarai, located in Daquq. Two police officers were killed.³⁵⁹
- On 25 August 2019, six people were killed in a mortar attack by ISIS on a football pitch in Daquq.³⁶⁰
- In August 2019, a number of attacks and other acts of violence took place against members of the Kakai minority in the villages of Topzawa, Ali Saray and Zanqar, located south of Daquq district.³⁶¹
- On 4 September 2019, ISIS kidnapped the village chief of Abdullah Al-Yassin. Another man in Hawija was also abducted, apparently because of his involvement in the Iraqi security forces.³⁶²
- On 15 September 2019, two policemen were killed in an IED attack in Al-Rashad.³⁶³
- On 19 September 2019, a policeman was killed in an IED attack in Al-Rashad.³⁶⁴
- On 2 October 2019, in an air raid by the international coalition against ISIS, ten ISIS fighters were killed in Hawija.³⁶⁵
- On 8 October 2019, seven ISIS fighters were killed in an anti-terrorism operation by the Counter Terrorism Service in the district of Daquq.³⁶⁶
- On 11 October 2019, ISIS fighters killed Zakaria Taha Saleh Mansour, the mayor (*mukhtar*) of Al-Rashad.³⁶⁷
- On 23 October 2019, three civilians were killed in an IED attack in Riyadh, located west of Kirkuk.³⁶⁸
- On 24 October 2019, two civilians were killed in an IED attack in the Khazir region, northwest of Kirkuk.³⁶⁹
- On 25 October 2019, ISIS snipers killed two police officers near Taza, south of Kirkuk.³⁷⁰

³⁵⁴ EPIC, 27/06/2019, [url](#)

³⁵⁵ Kurdistan 24, 26/06/2019, [url](#)

³⁵⁶ Iraqi News, 10/07/2019, [url](#)

³⁵⁷ EPIC, 18/07/2019, [url](#)

³⁵⁸ EPIC, 25/07/2019, [url](#)

³⁵⁹ EPIC, 15/08/2019, [url](#)

³⁶⁰ Inspector General - Department of Defense (USA), 19/11/2019, p. 46, [url](#); Iraqi News, 25/08/2019, [url](#)

³⁶¹ Kirkuk Now, 22/08/2019, [url](#)

³⁶² EPIC, 05/09/2019, [url](#)

³⁶³ EPIC, 19/09/2019, [url](#)

³⁶⁴ EPIC, 26/09/2019, [url](#)

³⁶⁵ EPIC, 03/10/2019, [url](#)

³⁶⁶ Iraqi News, 08/10/2019, [url](#)

³⁶⁷ EPIC, 17/10/2019, [url](#)

³⁶⁸ EPIC, 25/10/2019, [url](#)

³⁶⁹ EPIC, 25/10/2019, [url](#)

³⁷⁰ EPIC, 31/10/2019, [url](#)

- On 31 October 2019, PMF militiamen killed three alleged ISIS fighters in a military operation in Tel Gul.³⁷¹
- On 12 November 2019, the Federal Police and the PMF conducted a security operation in Riyadh, located in Hawija. Three ISIS fighters were killed, including ISIS leader Ali Hisham Mulan.³⁷²
- On 20 November 2019, ISIS killed three officers in an attack on a police patrol in Al-Rashad.³⁷³
- On 21 November 2019, an ISIS attack on a Federal Police checkpoint in Rashad, district of Hawija, killed two agents.³⁷⁴
- On 25 November 2019, Federal Police agents killed six members of ISIS in Wadi al-Karha.³⁷⁵
- On 3 December 2019, the police in Hawija arrested ISIS leader Abu Khaldoun. This close associate of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was considered the military leader of ISIS in the province of Salah al-Din.³⁷⁶
- On 7 December 2019, ISIS fighters attacked PMF in Al-Dandish, located in the district of Hawija. Two Shia militia members were killed, three were injured.³⁷⁷
- On 15 December 2019, ISIS killed two *Federal Police* officers in the Zhaiton Valley.³⁷⁸
- On 24 December 2019, ISIS fighters attacked the Khabbaz oil field west of the city of Kirkuk. One policeman was killed.³⁷⁹
- On 25 December 2019, ISIS fighters killed two members of a tribal militia in the village of Alu Mahmoud, in the district of Dibis.³⁸⁰
- On 27 December 2019, a US Army employee was killed in a rocket attack on the K1 military base near Kirkuk. Four American soldiers and two members of the Iraqi security forces were injured. The United States attributed this attack to KH.³⁸¹
- On 28 December 2019, a family of five were killed at a fake checkpoint set up by ISIS in the subdistrict of Rashad, in the district of Hawija.³⁸²
- On 15 January 2020, ISIS killed two farmers in the Zughaytun Valley, located south of Kirkuk province.³⁸³
- On 18 January 2020, ISIS fighters killed a soldier in an attack on an army post in Tel al-Theib.³⁸⁴

6.5. Ninewa

6.5.1. Territorial control

Control over the territory of the province of Ninewa does not coincide with its official boundaries. The Akre and Sheikhhan districts, although officially part of the province, have been under the continuous control of the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI) since the introduction of the so-called 'Green Line', which marked the truce between Saddam Hussein's regime and the Kurds imposed by the United States in

³⁷¹ EPIC, 07/11/2019, [url](#)

³⁷² EPIC, 14/11/2019, [url](#)

³⁷³ EPIC, 21/11/2019, [url](#)

³⁷⁴ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 27/11/2019, [url](#)

³⁷⁵ EPIC, 05/12/2019, [url](#)

³⁷⁶ Al Arabiya, 03/12/2019, [url](#)

³⁷⁷ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 12/12/2019, [url](#)

³⁷⁸ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 22/12/2019, [url](#)

³⁷⁹ EPIC, 02/01/2020, [url](#)

³⁸⁰ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 27/12/2019, [url](#)

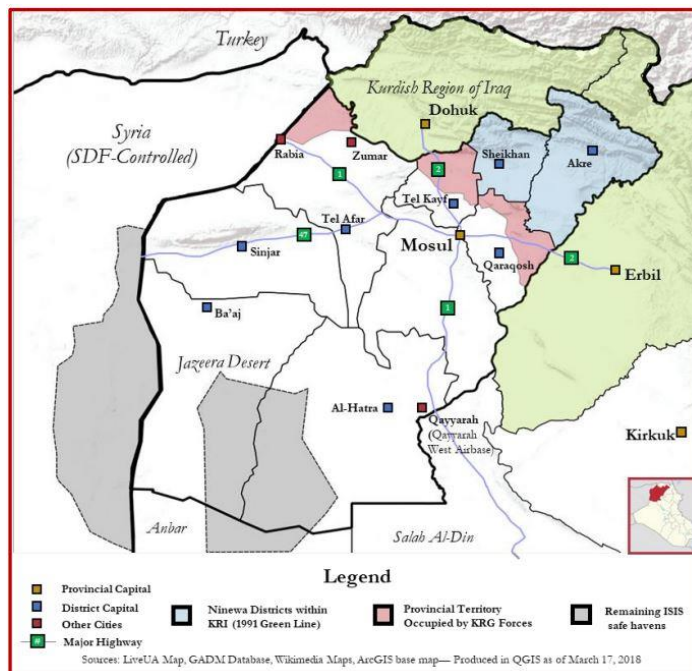
³⁸¹ Al-Monitor, 30/12/2019, [url](#)

³⁸² Kurdistan 24, 28/12/2019, [url](#)

³⁸³ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 15/01/2020, [url](#)

³⁸⁴ EPIC, 23/01/2020, [url](#)

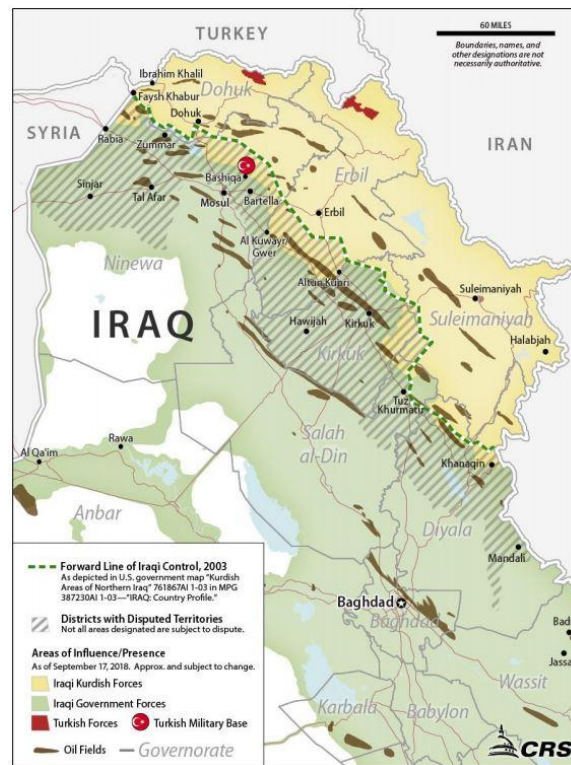
1991. Control over the area adjacent to the KRI remains disputed. Large parts of the province are formally designated as disputed territory by the Iraqi constitution of 2005.³⁸⁵ Some of these areas are actually under Kurdish control. These are parts of the districts Tal Afar, Tel Kayf and Hamdaniya (see maps below). The boundaries of this sphere of influence are not clearly defined. Maps of the area from different sources show small deviations:



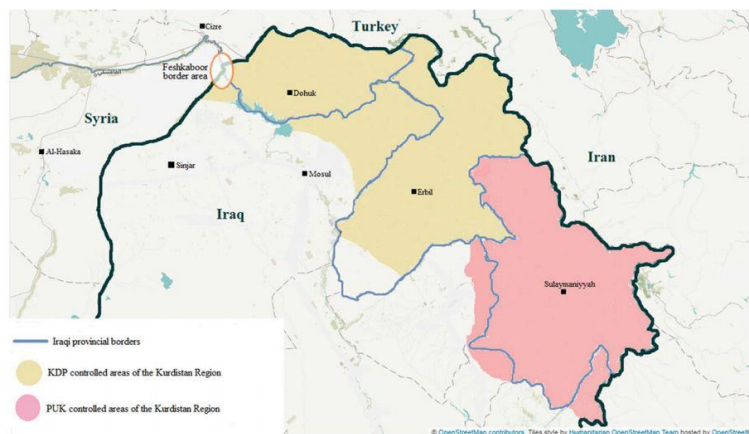
Ahn, J. et al., The Politics of Security in Ninewa: Preventing an ISIS Resurgence in Northern Iraq³⁸⁶

³⁸⁵ Ahn, J. et al., 07/05/2018, p. 6, [url](#)

³⁸⁶ Ahn, J. et al., 07/05/2018, p. 6, [url](#)



US CRS, Iraq: Issues in the 115th Congress, 4 October 2018, p. 12 ³⁸⁷



Clingendael, In the eye of the storm? (In)stability in Western Iraqi Kurdistan, 07/2018, p. 6 ³⁸⁸

These differences are due, among other things, to the lack of clarity as to where national or local security actors are active in the regions mentioned. The situation as described in the EASO safety situation report of March 2019 is still ongoing. Dozens of armed groups, whether or not under the official umbrella of the PMF or under the authority of the KRI, often control only small sections of an area. The fragmentation of the security actors also makes access difficult for observers and aid

³⁸⁷ US CRS, 04/10/2018, p. 12, [url](#)

³⁸⁸ Clingendael, 13/07/2018, [url](#); EASO, 13/03/2019, p. 6, [url](#)

workers.³⁸⁹ According to the UN report of 22 November 2019, access for humanitarian aid is restricted in 93% of the districts in the central and northern provinces. This applies in the first place to Ninewa. The reasons for these restrictions are the fragmentation of the security actors and the lack of coordination between them, as well as the numerous and constantly changing administrative and other requirements for obtaining permission to work in an area.³⁹⁰

6.5.2. General situation

The reconstruction of the destroyed houses and infrastructure in Ninewa is slow, primarily due to the lack of the necessary funds. This is in part due to the serious corruption that led to the resignation of the provincial governor and a warrant for his arrest following popular demonstrations. The governor was accused of siphoning off subsidies for the reconstruction of the destroyed bridges over the Tigris in Mosul. On the Kurdish New Year of 21 March 2019, more than 100 people drowned when a makeshift ferry capsized in the river. Public anger was directed towards the governor, who fled to the KRI.³⁹¹

The lack of state aid for reconstruction is most visible in heavily destroyed West Mosul.³⁹² Other places also have to contend with war damage that is difficult to repair. The district of Sinjar suffers from unclear and uncoordinated security actors impeding access to the region, as mentioned in the UN Secretary-General's report of 5 August 2019, as well as from the lack of a stable government which, according to the same source, must be formed in consultation between the various parties.³⁹³

The fragmentation of the security actors and the patchy control over them by the central government creates problems. The most high-profile case was that of the 30th PMF Brigade: on 11 September 2019, members of the 30th PMF Brigade (Liwa al-Shabak) stopped the motorcade of the deputy governor and a member of parliament at a checkpoint outside Mosul. Four bodyguards were injured and arrested. This was one of several incidents involving this brigade which had already been ordered by the central authorities to leave Ninewa in August 2018 and again in July 2019. This Shabak militia was accused of expelling Christians, confiscating property, denying access to aid organisations, and extorting money at their manned checkpoints. Moreover, they also appear to have been guilty of kidnapping and rape. In July 2019, the same group had protested for two days against its removal, blocking the connecting road between Mosul and Erbil.³⁹⁴ The 50th Brigade, (Kata'ib Babilyun, Babylon Brigade), a Christian militia, were also condemned for similar actions. The leaders of both militias have been issued with sanctions by the U.S. government.³⁹⁵

According to a report by the IOM on the impact of the conflict with ISIS on the economy in rural communities in Sinjar and the Ninewa Plains, returning residents of these areas found that a large proportion of their belongings had been destroyed or stolen, including their livestock. Farmers in these regions find it difficult to bring their holdings back to pre-war levels. 85% of settlements in Sinjar depend on agriculture.³⁹⁶ Unemployment is high, both in the countryside and in the cities. Many residents who fled have not yet returned. According to the IOM report, many settlements seem to have been abandoned. In the north of the district, the situation appears to be better, but according to

³⁸⁹ UN Security Council, 22/11/2019, [url](#)

³⁹⁰ UN Security Council, 22/11/2019, [url](#)

³⁹¹ The Guardian, 05/12/2019, [url](#)

³⁹² EASO, 13/03/2019, [url](#)

³⁹³ UN Security Council, 05/08/2019, p. 12, [url](#)

³⁹⁴ Musings on Iraq, 16/09/2019, [url](#); Kurdistan24, 19/07/2019, [url](#)

³⁹⁵ Kurdistan24, 19/07/2019, [url](#)

³⁹⁶ IOM Iraq, 28/11/2019, p. 23, [url](#)

this report, the city of Sinjar and the neighbouring villages are "ghost towns".³⁹⁷ Of all the areas in Ninewa studied by the IOM, Sinjar also suffers from the highest food insecurity.³⁹⁸

The IOM highlights the fact that fears of ethnic and religious tensions are stronger in urban areas. According to the researchers, this could be due to the fact that rural settlements have a homogeneous population make-up. Tensions there are more likely to occur between villages or sub-districts.³⁹⁹ Incidents such as reprisals, ethnic-religious or tribal tensions, and the lack of reconciliation initiatives are particularly common in Sinjar. Four out of five settlements mentioned the need for reconciliation between communities, but only one in ten indicated that such initiatives were taking place.⁴⁰⁰

An additional factor of inter-community and intra-community tensions is the accelerated closure of IDP camps in Ninewa, which has sometimes taken place without prior agreements with international humanitarian partners. According to the UN Secretary General's report to the UN Security Council of 22 November 2019, this has led to humanitarian shortages. The same report states that the communities to which IDPs returned were not informed in advance, which meant that no preparations could be made to reduce tensions between groups.⁴⁰¹

6.5.3. Security incidents

Security incidents occurred throughout the province during the period under study: in addition to air attacks by the Iraqi Air Force and the international coalition on presumed ISIS hideouts, there were military ground operations by the ISF and PMF against ISIS, as well as attacks by the terrorist organisation on the ISF, and also on civilians. The Turkish Air Force attacked positions of the Kurdish/Yezidi YBS in Sinjar. There were also demonstrations protesting corruption by the deposed governor, and protests by members of a PMF brigade against the order given them to leave Mosul and the Ninewa Plains (see above).⁴⁰²

A map of Ninewa showing the incidents involving explosives recorded by EPIC from March 2019 to January 2020, and all incidents recorded by ACLED from 1 January 2019 to 31 January 2020, shows that ISIS did not carry out any attacks in Akre and Sheikhan districts during this period:

³⁹⁷ IOM Iraq, 28/11/2019, p. 20, [url](#)

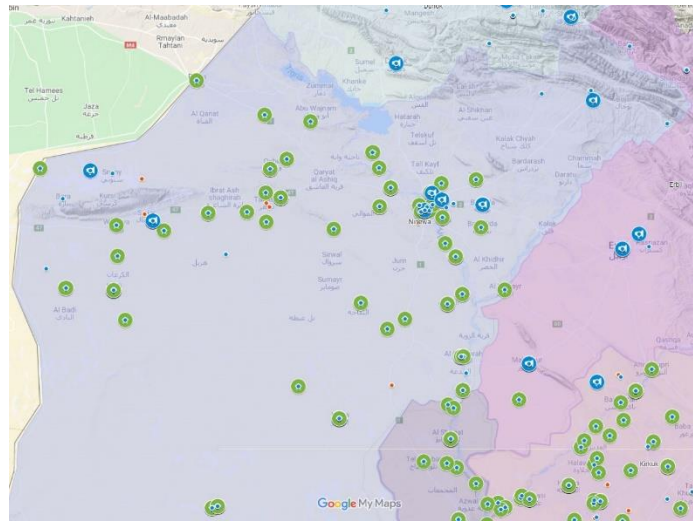
³⁹⁸ IOM Iraq, 28/11/2019, p. 24, [url](#)

³⁹⁹ IOM Iraq, 28/11/2019, p. 25, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁰ IOM Iraq, 28/11/2019, p. 25, [url](#); IOM Iraq, 18/04/2019, p. 11, 45, [url](#)

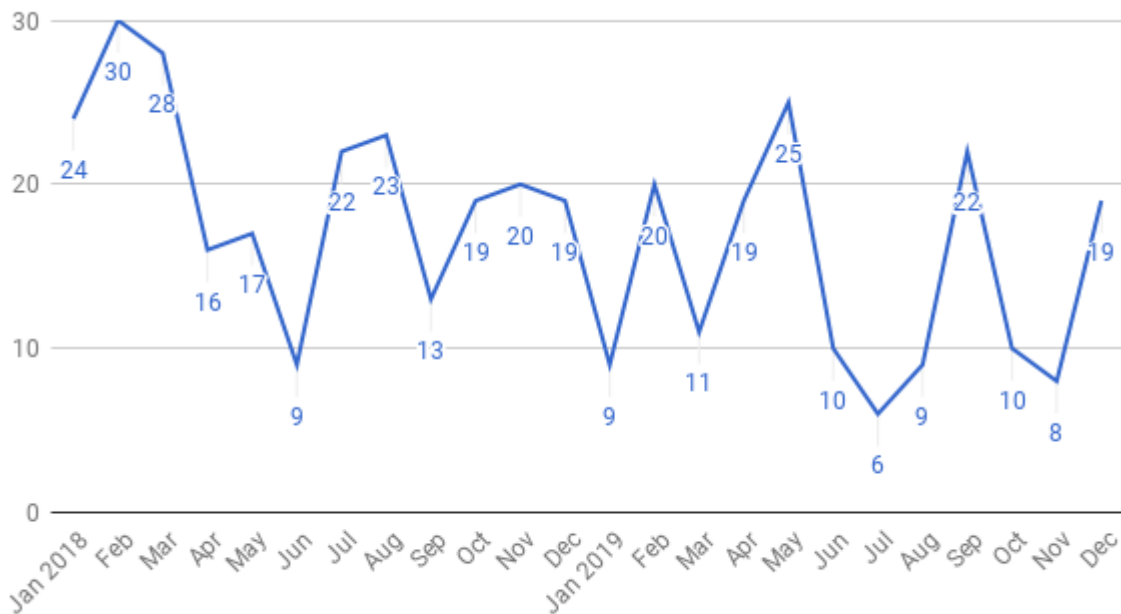
⁴⁰¹ UN Security Council, 22/11/2019, [url](#)

⁴⁰² See list of incidents below



EPIC, attacks with explosives, 28/02/2019-16/01/2020; ACLED, all incidents, 01/01/2019 - 31/01/2020 (red dots = EPIC, green symbols = ACLED, attacks by ISIS, blue megaphone = demonstrations, blue dots = all events recorded by ACLED)⁴⁰³

The number of incidents per month recorded by Joel Wing of Musings on Iraq remained within the same margins from April 2018 to December 2019:



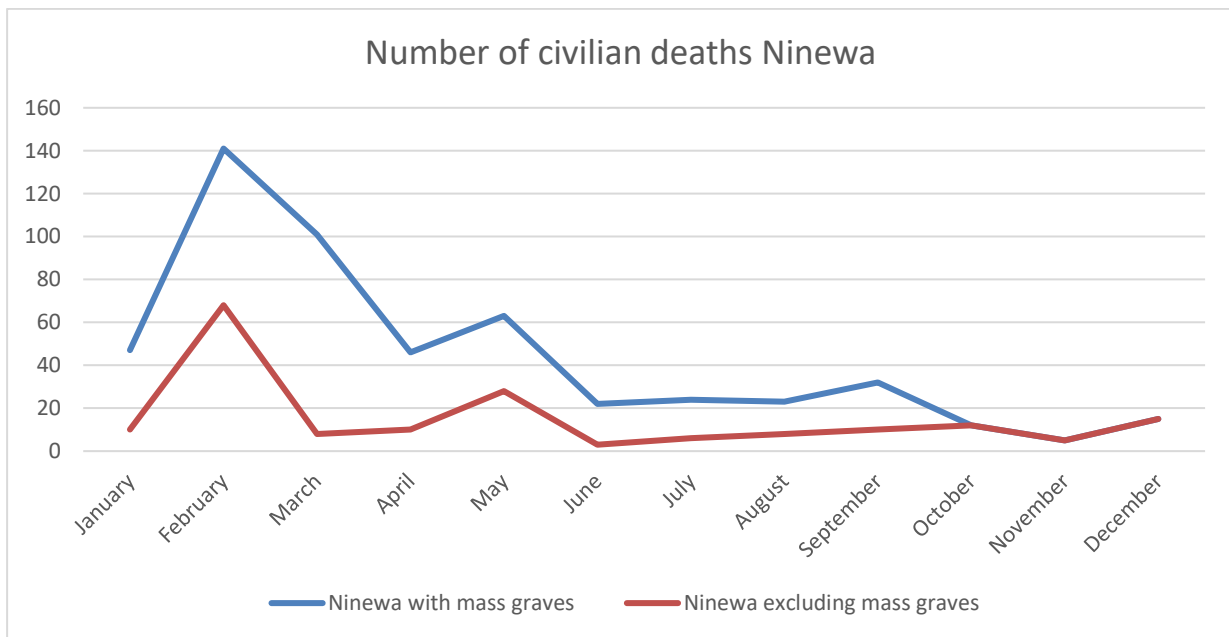
Ninewa Attacks 2018-19

Musings on Iraq, Islamic State Makes Its Return In December 2019, 06/01/2020,⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰³ EPIC, 22/01/2020, [url](#); ACLED, compilation by Cedoca on Google Maps, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁴ Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#)

The number of civilian casualties identified by Musings on Iraq in Ninewa in 2019 is distorted by the regular discovery of mass graves in the province (outside Ninewa this is much less significant). The following graph contains two lines: the upper line shows all civilian deaths counted by Musings on Iraq in 2019, the lower line shows the civilian deaths excluding the mass graves that Joel Wing himself highlighted in his reports, which were discovered on the territory of the province in the months in question and which he includes in his general statistics:



Wing, J., Musings on Iraq, Iraqi Deaths, Ninewa⁴⁰⁵

Only the mass graves explicitly mentioned by Joel Wing in his blog, with the number of dead found as mentioned by him, are deducted in the graph. It is likely that the relatively high numbers in February and May are due to more finds of victims of the conflict with ISIS, but these are not explicitly mentioned in the blog. These deaths include victims of ISIS and of air raids and bombings during the conflict. For the whole of 2019, the blog counts 531 civilian deaths, of which 348 in mass graves from the time of the conflict with ISIS (2014-2017). There remain 183 current civilian fatalities, which represents an average of just over fifteen a month.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁵ Musings on Iraq, undated, [url](#), compilation by Cedoca

⁴⁰⁶ Musings on Iraq, undated, [url](#), compilation by Cedoca; also in other provinces graves containing victims of the conflict with ISIS are found, but only in Ninewa is the number of victims found in this way so high.

Overview of security incidents in Ninewa in 2019 and 2020 with civilian fatalities, by ACLED

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Date	District	Location	Source	Notes	Fat.
5/01/2019	Mosul	Badush	Amaq	On Jan 05, 3 PMF intelligence fighters had their homes raided by IS and were killed in Badush area.	3
10/01/2019	Mosul	Mosul - Al-Rabee	Yaqein	As reported on Jan 10, an unidentified armed group shot dead the al-Harmat area Mukhtar (local leader), in Mosul city (Al Rabee).	1
27/01/2019	Hatra	Shurah	Anadolu Agency	As reported on Jan 27, an Iraqi man and his wife were shot dead by suspected IS militants in al Shurah, south of Mosul.	2
29/01/2019	Mosul	Mosul - Al-Salam	Amaq	On Jan 29, two civilians (alleged spies for the PMF) were killed by IS gunfire in al Malutha village west of Mosul.	2
6/02/2019	Mosul	Mosul	Al Maloomah	As reported on Feb 06, IS militants attacked Zoor al-Kanus village south of Mosul using gunfire, killing a number of civilians and injuring others (unknown fatalities).	3
21/02/2019	Al Baaj	Al Baaj	National Iraqi News Agency	As reported on Feb 21, unidentified armed men shot dead an employee of the municipality of Ninewa in Baaj district.	1
28/02/2019	Mosul	Mosul	Baghdad Post; AP	On Feb 28, two suspected attacks by IS militants involving the explosion of two bombs in the city of Mosul killing 1 person and wounding 24 others.	1
8/03/2019	Mosul	Mosul - Al-Ghizlani	AP	On Mar 08, a suspected IS planted car bomb outside a restaurant in Muthanna (Al-Ghizlani) Mosul city, killing 2 civilians including a 13-year-old girl, and wounded 10 others.	2
15/04/19	Sinjar	Al Qayrawan	Amaq	On Apr 15, IS militants killed the Mukhtar of Bir al-Maleh village and an accused spy for the PMF after being abducted in al Qayrawan west of Ninewa province.	2
29/04/19	Telafar	Telafar	National Iraqi News Agency	On Apr 29, an IS remnant IED exploded in Tel Afar district killing a farmer (Ibrahim Mohammed Younis) and injuring engineer (Mahdi Ibrahim Sulaiman) and agricultural engineer (Assi Idris Hussein), who work in the Department of Agriculture in Tal Afar.	1
9/05/2019	Mosul	Qaryat Lazakah	National Iraqi News Agency	As reported on May 9, IS militants attacked the house of the Mukhtar of the village of Al-Lazakah in the area of Hammam al-Alil in Nineveh province, which resulted in the killing of him and 5 of his family members, and wounding 2 others.	6
9/05/2019	Mosul	Mosul - Al-Jadeda	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan	On May 9, 2019, IS militants attacked the home of the mukhtar of Tall al Rumman, in Mosul's Al Jadeda neighbourhood. The	4

⁴⁰⁷ ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#)

				attacked killed the mukhtar, his wife and two children. 2 other children were injured.	
20/05/2019	Telafar	Telafar	National Iraqi News Agency	As reported On May 20, 4 farmers were killed and 3 others were wounded by the explosion of unidentified explosive devices while harvesting in their agricultural land in the district of Tal Afar west of Mosul.	4
22/05/2019	Mosul	Shurah	National Iraqi News Agency	As reported on May 22, an unidentified explosive device exploded when a civilian car passed in Shoura area, killing the driver.	1
26/05/2019	Telafar	Tall Uwaynat	Xinhua; Al Sumaria TV	On May 26, a suspected IS booby-trapped truck was detonated at a crowded marketplace in the village of al-Uwaynat near the town of Rabiaa, killing 5 civilians and injuring 8 others.	5
27/05/2019	Mosul	Badiyat al Jazirah	Amaq	On May 27, 1 Peshmerga fighter was killed after being captured by IS militants near the Jazirah complex in Sinjar, west of Mosul.	1
21/06/2019	Mosul	Mosul - Al-Salam	National Iraqi News Agency	On June 21, a girl was killed and three others wounded when an IS remnant bomb exploded near the cemetery of al-Quds (Jerusalem) neighborhood (Al Salam) on the left side of Mosul.	1
23/06/2019	Mosul	Hajj Ali	National Iraqi News Agency	As reported on June 23, unidentified armed men attacked the village of Haj Ali in the area of al Qayara and managed to kill the owner of a civil generator inside the village.	1
23/06/2019	Telafar	Al Muhallabiyah	National Iraqi News Agency	As reported on June 23, unidentified armed men attacked the village of Tufaha within the area of Al Muhallabiyah and killed the son of the village's Mukhtar and fled to an unknown location.	1
27/06/2019	Al Baaj	Al Khuzirjyah	Yaqein	On June 27, an IS armed attack on the village of al- Khuzirjyah in al-Baaj district, resulted in the killing of 2 women and the injury of a Sheikh and a number of children.	2
24/08/19	Mosul	Shurah	Yaqein	On Aug 24, an unidentified mortar shell fell on a civilian home in Tal Tiba in Al Shurah area, southern Mosul, killing 1 civilian and injuring another.	1
31/08/19	Mosul	Hammam al Alil	National Iraqi News Agency	On Aug 31, unidentified armed men reportedly killed 5 members of the same family in Hammam al-Alil district in Ninewa province.	5
3/09/19	Mosul	Al Qayyarah	Shafaaq News	On Sept 3, a US explosives expert, who works for a foreign agency specialised in lifting mines and other explosive remnants of war was killed while defusing an explosive device in Tal al-Shair village in Qayara district in Mosul.	1
9/09/19	Telafar	Salhia	National Iraqi News Agency	On Sept 09, an unidentified IED planted roadside exploded killing 1 farmer and injuring 6 others as they passed through the village of Salahia, south of Mosul.	1

13/09/19	Mosul	Shurah	Iraq News Gazette	On Sept 13, an unidentified IED exploded near a vegetable seller, killing him near Zulfha village in Shura district south of Mosul.	1
20/09/19	Mosul	Mosul - Al-Rabee	Iraq News Gazette	On Sept 20, unidentified armed men stormed the house of the Mukhtar of Tall al-Zallat area in the Yarmouk neighborhood (Al Rabee) in Mosul city and killed him.	1
3/10/2019	Telafar	Telafar	Sotaliraq	On Oct 3, an unidentified IED explosion in Telafar city, Ninewa left 1 civilian killed and another injured.	1
17/10/2019	Mosul	Shurah	Al Sumaria TV	Reported on 17 October 2019, a bomb planted by an unidentified armed group killed 1 civilian, in Shura of Mosul district, Ninewa.	1
23/10/2019	Hatra	Al Marir	Baghdad Today	On Oct 23, the mukhtar of al-Marir village in Hatra district was killed in an IS attack in the village.	1
18/12/19	Mosul	Bishmana	Al Maloomah; Xinhua	On Dec 18, IS militants dressed in army gear attacked the administrative chief of Bishmana village near the town of al-Shurah and killed him.	1
25/12/19	Mosul	Mosul	Yaqein	On Dec 25, 2 people were killed by IS gunfire after they were kidnapped from their village Hulwat, southeast of Mosul.	2
28/12/19	Hatra	Hatra	Liveuamap	On Dec 28, IS militants killed 2 civilians in Hatra district.	2
8/01/2020	Hatra	Hatra	Basnews	On 08 January, 2020, an unknown armed group riding a motorbike, opened fire on civilians in Hatra town, in Ninewa province, killing 1 man, and injuring the other.	1
23/01/2020	Hatra	Hatra	Al Sumaria TV	On Jan 23, IS militants attacked a civilian in Hatra inside his home, killing him and burning his house.	1
29/01/2020	Hatra	Hatra	Yaqein	As reported on Jan 29, an unidentified IED exploded on a civilian vehicle in Hammad district in Hatra, killing 1 person and injuring 3 of his children.	1

Overview of security incidents in Ninewa in 2019 and 2020, by different sources

- On 31 January 2019, unknown gunmen shot a civilian in the village of Bazwaya. The perpetrators managed to escape.⁴⁰⁸
- On 15 February 2019, armed men attacked the village of Taya in western Qayyara district and killed a woman. According to local authorities in Qayyara, the perpetrators were ISIS militants.⁴⁰⁹
- On 16 February 2019, the Civil Protection found buried under the rubble of the Al-Qadimah district in Mosul the corpses of men and women who had died during the conflict with ISIS.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁸ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 06/02/2019, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁹ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 20/02/2019, [url](#)

⁴¹⁰ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 20/02/2019, [url](#)

- On 17 February 2019, security forces discovered a car bomb near Badush driven by a suicide bomber.⁴¹¹
- On 17 March 2019, a PKK militant was killed and two others were wounded in a battle with the ISF in Sinjar district.⁴¹²
- On 21 March 2019, 128 people, including 57 women and 44 children, were killed in a ferry accident over the Tigris in Mosul. 69 people are still missing.⁴¹³ The governor of Ninewa, who is suspected of embezzling public funds, was fired, and fled to avoid arrest.⁴¹⁴
- On 24 March 2019, three ISIS militants wearing suicide vests in Sinjar district were killed by the ISF.⁴¹⁵
- On 15 April 2019, two civilians were kidnapped by ISIS militants wearing military uniforms.⁴¹⁶
- On 24 April 2019, the bodies of two civilians executed by ISIS were found in Tal Afar.⁴¹⁷
- On 24 April 2019, Iraqi News reported that dozens of reprisals on relatives of ISIS militants had been committed in Mosul, including several murders.⁴¹⁸
- On 30 April 2019, seven terrorist suspects were arrested in the al-Ba'aj district.⁴¹⁹
- Between 5 and 7 August, a military operation took place in the western part of the province, to trace ISIS cells.⁴²⁰
- On 6 October 2019, a military operation was started against infiltration of ISIS cells from Syria.⁴²¹
- On 4 November 2019, the Turkish Air Force bombed Khanasur in Sinjar, two YBS fighters were wounded.⁴²²
- On 8 November 2019, unknown attackers fired four rockets at the military base of Qayyara. The security services retaliated and killed three attackers.⁴²³
- On 9 November 2019, an IED exploded on a transport vehicle in the village of Qaraj, southwest of Mosul, three civilians were injured by the explosion.⁴²⁴
- On 9 November 2019, an IED exploded next to an army patrol on the access road to the district of Tal Afar. Three civilians were injured.⁴²⁵
- On 12 November 2019, the security services carried out an operation in the Badush Mountains and killed three ISIS members in a tunnel.⁴²⁶
- On 18 November 2019, the *mukhtar* of the village of Ahlila was killed in East Mosul.⁴²⁷
- On 19 November 2019, units of the PMF managed to destroy three ISIS bases in the south of the Hatra district.⁴²⁸
- On 19 November 2019, the Iraqi Air Force bombed an ISIS tunnel in the Badush Mountains, killing six militants.⁴²⁹

⁴¹¹ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 20/02/2019, [url](#)

⁴¹² Iraqi News, 17/03/2019, [url](#)

⁴¹³ The Guardian, 05/12/2019, [url](#)

⁴¹⁴ Reuters, 27/03/2019, [url](#)

⁴¹⁵ Iraqi News, 24/03/2019, [url](#)

⁴¹⁶ Iraqi News, 15/04/2019, [url](#)

⁴¹⁷ Iraqi News, 23/04/2019, [url](#)

⁴¹⁸ Iraqi News, 24/04/2019, [url](#)

⁴¹⁹ Iraqi News, 30/04/2019, [url](#)

⁴²⁰ UN Security Council, 22/11/2019, p. 5, [url](#)

⁴²¹ UN Security Council, 22/11/2019, pp. 5-6, [url](#)

⁴²² NRTTV, 04/11/2019, [url](#)

⁴²³ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 13/11/2019, [url](#)

⁴²⁴ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 13/11/2019, [url](#)

⁴²⁵ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 13/11/2019, [url](#)

⁴²⁶ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 13/11/2019, [url](#)

⁴²⁷ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 20/11/2019, [url](#)

⁴²⁸ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 20/11/2019, [url](#)

⁴²⁹ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 20/11/2019, [url](#)

- On 19 November 2019, in the Al-Qadima district of Mosul, the Civil Protection found six corpses of ISIS fighters who died during the war.⁴³⁰
- On 20 November 2019, the Turkish Air Force bombed Khanasur near Sinjar, 45 people were wounded.⁴³¹
- On 22 November 2019, an IED exploded next to a truck at the entrance to the subdistrict of Hammam Alil. Two civilians were wounded.⁴³²
- On 22 November 2019, the military intelligence services found a tunnel in Mosul containing an extensive arsenal intended for staging attacks with IEDs and firearms.⁴³³
- On 21 December 2019, the PMF foiled a suicide attack in the Al-Hader sector in Southern Mosul. The PMF forced the attackers to flee.⁴³⁴
- On 22 December 2019, ISIS attacked the village of Al-Rusif in the district of Shoura (South Mosul), killing two civilians and injuring another.⁴³⁵
- On 28 December 2019, the Iraqi Air Force carried out an air raid south of Mosul, killing six ISIS militants.⁴³⁶
- On 30 December 2019, two wounded civilians were killed in an IED explosion next to a local police column in the subdistrict of Wana, north-east of Mosul.⁴³⁷
- On 31 December 2019, in the region of Al-Hader, 90 km south of Mosul, the security forces found a mass grave containing 30 bodies, most of which appear to belong to the Federal Police.⁴³⁸
- On 31 December 2019, the international coalition launched an air raid on Jabal Al-Manayef, near the al-Ba'aj district, killing four ISIS fighters.⁴³⁹
- On 2 January 2020, a checkpoint of a tribal militia in the village of Al-Haj in the subdistrict of Qayara was attacked with light weapons by unknown attackers. Two militiamen were killed.⁴⁴⁰
- On 8 January 2020, civilians in the district of Hatra were shot at by unknown attackers. One person was killed and another injured.⁴⁴¹

6.6. Salah al-Din

6.6.1. General situation

The analysis of the situation in Salah al-Din province as described in the EASO report on the safety situation (Chapter 2.6 Salah al-Din) for 2018 remains applicable in 2019 and early 2020.⁴⁴²

ISIS is mainly active in rural areas in the province, such as the Hamrin Mountains which, according to Musings on Iraq, is one of ISIS' key areas.⁴⁴³ Most ISIS actions in the province are limited in scale (see below), but the terrorist organisation is present in several districts, including the Tigris Valley, the Makhoul Mountains, and to a greater extent in the above-mentioned Hamrin Mountains. From

⁴³⁰ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 20/11/2019, [url](#)

⁴³¹ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 20/11/2019, [url](#)

⁴³² iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 27/11/2019, [url](#)

⁴³³ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 27/11/2019, [url](#)

⁴³⁴ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 25/12/2019, [url](#)

⁴³⁵ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 25/12/2019, [url](#)

⁴³⁶ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 01/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴³⁷ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 01/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴³⁸ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 01/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴³⁹ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 01/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁰ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 08/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁴³ iMMAP - IHF Humanitarian, 08/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁴² EASO, 13/03/2019, p. 133-147, [url](#)

⁴⁴³ Musings on Iraq, 02/12/2019, [url](#)

these mountainous areas, ISIS is able to carry out attacks and retreat.⁴⁴⁴ The confrontations between the ISF, PMF and ISIS consist of ambushes on army units and militias and air raids on positions of ISIS fighters.⁴⁴⁵

Salah al-Din also has disputed territories within its territory, namely the district of Tuz Khurmatu.⁴⁴⁶ The population is mixed in this district, with Kurds and Shia Turkmen in competition with each other. In October 2017, fighting broke out in Tuz Khurmatu between Kurdish peshmerga and the ISF, which also led to looting by the local population. The ISF's invasion of Kirkuk province in the wake of the 2017 Kurdish referendum and the conquest of Hawija led to the ISF taking full control of the disputed district from the peshmerga.⁴⁴⁷ According to a report by the LSE Middle East Centre, Tuz Khurmatu has experienced more violence in the past than any other disputed territory.⁴⁴⁸ The Turkmen are associated with the Shia PMF, which has strengthened their position vis-à-vis the Kurds.⁴⁴⁹ To reduce tensions, units of the Rapid Response Force (RRF) were sent to Tuz Khurmatu as early as 2017 to facilitate the return of the Kurds who had fled. In effect, the Kurds felt threatened by the Shia PMF (especially by the brigades of Badr and AAH). Nonetheless, in the summer of 2018, the Iraqi government was forced to send sections of the RRF to Basra to deploy them in demonstrations. They were replaced by regular units of the Iraqi army, especially Shia Arabs who have more affinity with the Shia Turkmen than with the Sunni Kurds and Arabs.⁴⁵⁰

In 2019, Badr had de facto control over Tuz Khurmatu, and the Kurdish leaders are also indebted to them. According to a report by the LSE Middle East Centre, there is strong dissatisfaction among the Kurds with the current state of affairs and a great willingness within the Kurdish community to resort to violence as soon as the opportunity arises.⁴⁵¹ However, these tensions do not translate into an increased number of violent incidents in and around Tuz Khurmatu (see below).

6.6.2. Security incidents

Security incidents occurred throughout the province during the period under study. A map of Salah al-Din showing the incidents involving explosives recorded by EPIC from March 2019 to January 2020, and all incidents recorded by ACLED from 1 January 2019 to 31 January 2020, shows the following image:

⁴⁴⁴ Reuters, 09/07/2019, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁵ Military Times, 28/01/2020, [url](#); Xinhua, 09/09/2019, [url](#); Diyaruna, 28/03/2019, [url](#); INA, 19/12/2019, [url](#); Iran Press, 29/07/2019, 04/10/2019 [update], [url](#)

⁴⁴⁶ EASO, 13/03/2019, pp. 37-38, [url](#)

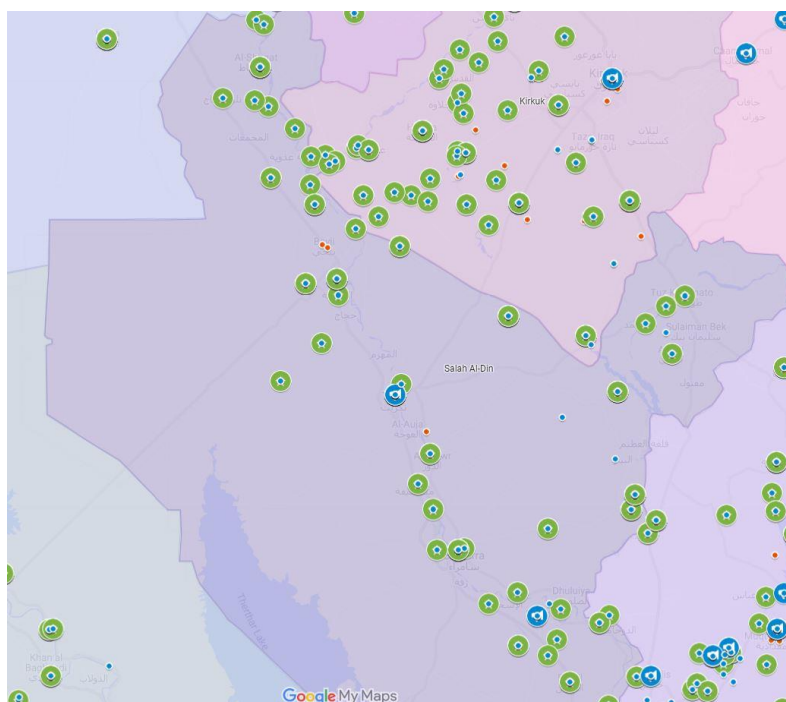
⁴⁴⁷ EASO, 13/03/2019, p. 134, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁸ LSE Middle East Centre, Skelton, M., Zmkan, A.S., 25/02/2019, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁹ LSE Middle East Centre, Skelton, M., Zmkan, A.S., 25/02/2019, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁰ LSE Middle East Centre, Skelton, M., Zmkan, A.S., 25/02/2019, [url](#)

⁴⁵¹ LSE Middle East Centre, Skelton, M., Zmkan, A.S., 25/02/2019, [url](#)



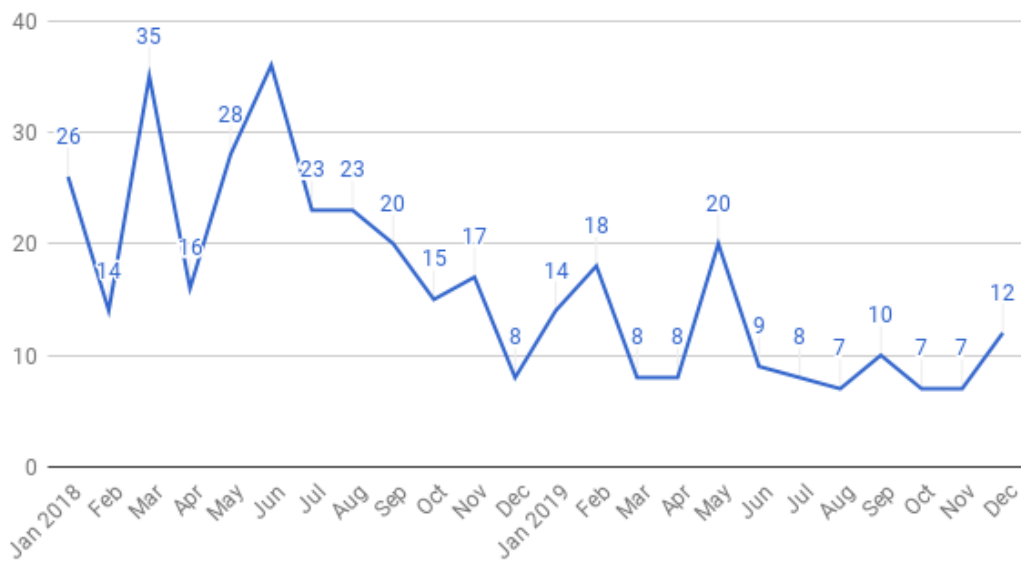
EPIC, attacks with explosives, 28/02/2019-16/01/2020; ACLED, all incidents, 01/01/2019 - 31/01/2020 (red dots = EPIC, green symbols = ACLED, attacks by ISIS, blue megaphone = demonstrations, blue dots = all events recorded by ACLED)⁴⁵²

Security incidents took place throughout the province during the period under study: in addition to shelling by the Iraqi army of presumed ISIS hideouts, there were also attacks by the terrorist organisation against the ISF and civilians. The ISIS attacks were carried out using IEDs, ambushes against the ISF and the PMF and by shelling. In Salah al-Din, there are relatively more confrontations between ISIS and the army/PMF, with casualties on both sides.⁴⁵³

The number of incidents per month is recorded by Joel Wing of Musings on Iraq. For Salah al-Din they remained within a range of seven to twenty per month from September 2018 to December 2019:

⁴⁵² EPIC, 22/01/2020, [url](#) ; ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#), compilation by Cedoca on Google Maps, [url](#)

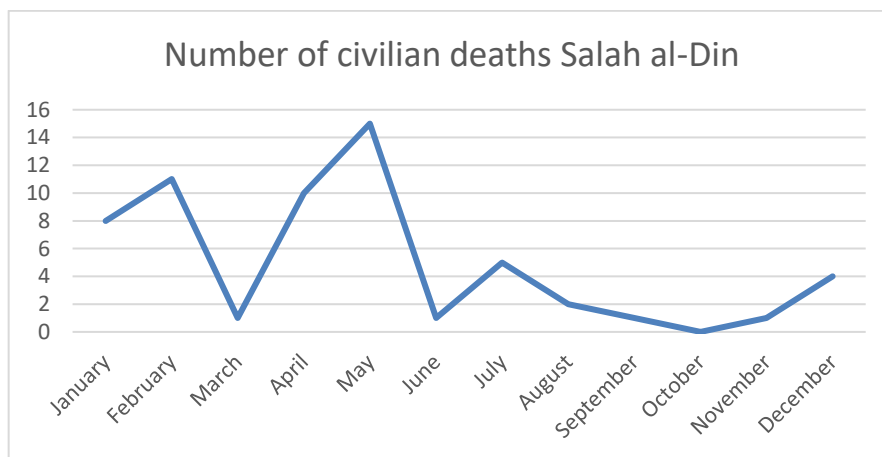
⁴⁵³ ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#)



Salahaddin Attacks 2018-19

Musings on Iraq, Islamic State Makes Its Return In December 2019, 06/01/2020 ⁴⁵⁴

The number of civilian casualties identified by Musings on Iraq in Salah al-Din in 2019 remains relatively limited, but there was a peak in May 2019 due to an increase in ISIS activity in that month:⁴⁵⁵



Wing, J., Musings on Iraq, Iraqi Deaths, Salah al-Din ⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁴ Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁵ Musings on Iraq, 06/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁶ Musings on Iraq, s.d., [url](#), compilation by Cedoca

Overview of security incidents in Salah al-Din in 2019 and 2020 with civilian fatalities, by ACLED ⁴⁵⁷

All incidents recorded by ACLED in Salah al-Din with at least one civilian fatality from 1 January 2019 until 31 January 2020:⁴⁵⁸

Date	District	Location	Source	Notes	Fat.
25/05/2019	Shirqat	Qaryat Tulul al Baj	Xinhua	On May 25, IS militants attacked a group of farmers who were harvesting wheat in the village of Tulul al-Baj, killing 4 farmers and setting fire in their farm and their harvester machine before they fled the scene.	4
26/12/2019	Tikrit	Nahiyat al Alam	Al Sumaria TV; Yaqein	On Dec 26, suspected IS militants set up a false checkpoint between Kirkuk and Tikrit on al-Alam road, killing at least 4 civilians.	4
06/02/2019	Baiji	Al Mishak	Anadolu Agency	On Feb 06, 3 brothers were executed near al Mishak village, Salahuddin province, by IS firing squad.	3
07/05/2019	Baiji	Al-Mazraa	Xinhua	On May 7, suspected IS militants opened fire on the house of Lt. Col. Wisam Mahmoud Hassan in the village of al-Mazarei in Salahuddin province, killing 3 people, and wounded 5 other family members.	3
17/12/2019	Baiji	Baiji	Al Ghad Press	On Dec 17, 3 truck drivers were killed and 1 was injured in an unidentified armed attack as they passed through the Baiji road in Baiji.	3
25/06/2019	Dujail	Dujail	Telegram	On /06/ 25, an IS planted IED targeted a civilian vehicle killing and injuring a number of Shia civilians. IS claimed the event and said that "a number of Shia were killed and wounded" when IS targeted their vehicle with an IED. Unknown fatalities.	3
12/12/2019	Shirqat	Qaryat Kanus al Ulya	Al Sumaria TV	On Dec 12, 3 students were killed and 2 others were injured after an IS war remnant IED exploded in Kanus village, Shirqat district.	3
22/03/2019	Daur	Al Mutassim	Al Sumaria TV; Xinhua	On Mar 22, Saraya al-Salam brigades (Peace Brigades) killed 2 IS militants in an armed clash in al Mutassim, in Salahuddin province and 1 civilian was also killed in the clashes.	3
09/07/2019	Shirqat	Shirqat	Liveuamap; National Iraqi News Agency	As reported on /07/ 9, two IS planted IEDs exploded near the water project in Shati al-Jidr village in the district of Sharqat, killing three people and injuring three PMF fighters.	3

⁴⁵⁷ ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁸ ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#)

01/02/2019	Baiji	Makhoul Mountain	Shafaaq News	As reported on Feb 1, 2 children were killed and 4 people from the same family were injured when an unidentified IED exploded in the Makhoul Mountains of Baiji district, targeting the family as they were taking a walk near a small mosque.	2
03/04/2019	Dujail	Dujail	Al Sumaria TV	On Apr 03, unidentified armed men targeted the home of a PMF leader with a hand grenade killing his son and his wife in the Dujail area south of Salahuddin province.	2
04/06/2019	Tooz	Qarah Naz	BBC News	Reported on 04 06 2019, a bomb planted by an unidentified armed group killed 2 farmers, in Qarah Naz village of Tooz district, Sala al-Din.	2
24/05/2019	Baiji	Baiji	Xinhua	On May 24, a suspected IS roadside bomb struck a civilian car on the main road near the town of Baiji, killing a woman and wounding her husband and her three children,	1
27/04/2019	Baiji	Baiji	Yaqein; National Iraqi News Agency	On Apr 27, an IS remnant bomb exploded as a driver was working on an excavator in the Tal al Zaatara area in Baiji district, killing the driver and injuring 2 workers.	1
31/01/2019	Baiji	Baiji	Anadolu Agency; Al Ghad Press	On Jan 31, an unidentified IED exploded near a bus carrying employees to the Baiji refinery on the outskirts of Baiji city, leaving 1 passenger (employee of the refinery) dead and 5 others injured.	1
23/03/2019	Baiji	Baiji	Al Sumaria TV	On Mar 23, 1 civilian was killed and another was wounded when IS militants opened fire at them while they were truffle hunting on the Haditha-Baiji road, west of Ramadi.	1
22/03/2019	Baiji	Baiji	Al Sumaria TV	On Mar 22, 1 civilian was killed and another was injured when IS militants opened fire on a group of young men in al Tabishiyah area near Baiji.	1
04/02/2019	Daur	Aradi al Jallam	Twitter; Liveuamap; Yaqein	As reported on Feb 04, an unidentified IED planted in al Jallam, east of Samarra, exploded killing 1 civilian and injured 6 others.	1
21/07/2019	Daur	Daur	Xinhua; Al Ghad Press; National Iraqi News Agency	On /07/ 21, an IS planted IED exploded near the town of Daur, east of Tikrit, killing a farmer and injuring his two sons.	1
25/06/2019	Dujail	Dujail	Telegram	On /06/ 25, IS militants opened fire, using machine guns, on a vehicle, killing one person on board and injuring another.	1
3/05/2019	Shirqat	Al Khadraniyah	Yaqein	On May 3, IS militants attacked a civilian vehicle in the area between Kanteirah and Lazakah villages in Shirqat district, killing 1 civilian and injuring 4 others.	1

11/12/2019	Shirqat	Shirqat	Yaqein	On Dec 11, a farmer was killed by an unidentified IS war remnant in southern Shirqat district in Salahuddin province.	1
7/11/2019	Shirqat	Shirqat	Yaqein; Al Sumaria TV; BBC News	On November 7, one civilian was killed and another injured by a bomb blast by an unknown actor in al-Shirqat town in Salah ad-Din province.	1
02/01/2020	Tikrit	Tikrit	Amaq	On Jan 02, an alleged PMF spy was killed by IS militants after they raided his home in Albu Sanou in Salahuddin province.	1
28/01/2020	Daur	Daur	Al Ghad Press	On Jan 28, IS militants attacked and killed a fisherman and injured another by gunfire in the Zallaya area in Daur district, Saladin province.	1
21/01/2020	Tooz	Tuz Khurma	ROJ News	On Jan 21, one of the associates of the head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Tuz Khurmato in Saladin province was found dead in his home, reportedly killed by an unidentified armed group.	1
09/05/2019	Shirqat	Shirqat	Xinhua	On May 9, IS militants stormed a mill and shot dead the guard in a village near the town of Shirqat.	1
03/02/2019	Balad	Balad	Telegram; AP; Shafaaq News	On Feb 03, 1 female Iranian Shia pilgrim was killed and 8 others were wounded when their bus came under gunfire in an attack claimed by IS militants on the Dhulu'iyah-Balad road in Salahuddin province.	1

6.7. Southern Provinces

6.7.1. General situation

The Iraqi south includes the provinces of Babil, Basra, Dhi Qar, Karbala, Maysan, Muthanna, Najaf, Qadisiyah and Wasit.⁴⁵⁹ This predominantly Shia region was largely spared from open fighting during the advance of ISIS in the summer of 2014.⁴⁶⁰ However, ISIS does carry out terrorist attacks in Southern Iraq⁴⁶¹ and the PMF recruits many young people there to drive ISIS back into the Central Iraqi provinces.⁴⁶² The population of Southern Iraq hardly benefits from the oil resources in the region. The favours of international oil companies are primarily claimed by political parties, tribal leaders and local militias.⁴⁶³ In addition to widespread corruption, Southern Iraq suffers from high levels of unemployment, poverty, poor public services, regular power cuts and poor water supply.⁴⁶⁴ Since

⁴⁵⁹ EASO, 13/03/2019, p. 159, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁰ EASO, 13/03/2019, pp. 163-164, [url](#); The New York Times, 08/09/2018, [url](#)

⁴⁶¹ EASO, 13/03/2019, pp. 166-170, [url](#)

⁴⁶² Financial Times, 31/07/2018, [url](#); The New York Times, 08/09/2018, [url](#)

⁴⁶³ The Guardian, 27/08/2018, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁴ Foreign Policy, 09/11/2018, [url](#); CNN, 07/09/2018, [url](#); NRC, 09/09/2018, [url](#)

2015, social dissatisfaction in this respect has regularly spilled over into protest demonstrations⁴⁶⁵, including in the cities.⁴⁶⁶

In 2020, the city of Jurf al-Sakhr, located north of the province of Babil, remained in the hands of the PMF. The originally Sunni population is not allowed to return.⁴⁶⁷ In August 2019, 31 unidentified bodies found in Babil were buried. According to Sunni politicians, these were victims of the sectarian violence that took place in the summer of 2014 north of the province.⁴⁶⁸ The holy cities of Najaf and Kerbala, situated in the provinces of the same name, are spiritual centres for the worldwide Shia religious community. Millions of pilgrims also visited the cities in 2019. The Iranian offer to send a police force to ensure law enforcement during the Arba'een celebration in October 2019 was turned down by the Iraqi authorities.⁴⁶⁹ The agricultural sector in predominantly rural Basra remains plagued by water scarcity.⁴⁷⁰ The limited water supply in Basra city is under pressure due to the increasing migration from the countryside to the city.⁴⁷¹ In the summer of 2019, four mass graves were discovered in the province of Muthanna. These were Kurdish victims of the Anfal campaign, the suppression of the Kurdish uprising in northern Iraq in 1988.⁴⁷² Qadisiya is known as the poorest province of the country: according to a local politician, 60 percent of its population lives in poverty.⁴⁷³ The provinces of Wasit, Maysan and Basra were hit by storms and floods in April 2019.⁴⁷⁴ In the province of Dhi Qar, the distribution of water through the numerous irrigation channels in the region has triggered tribal tensions.⁴⁷⁵ Unemployment and poverty rates in the province are high.⁴⁷⁶ In June 2019, the provincial governor of Dhi Qar, Yahya al-Nasiri, was voted out by the provincial council on charges of corruption.⁴⁷⁷ Field fires were reported in the provinces of Babylon, Maysan, Wasit, Diwaniyah, Muthanna and Najaf in June 2019. The Iraqi Prime Minister attributed the cause of these fires partly to negligence, partly to subversive activities.⁴⁷⁸

6.7.2. Protest demonstrations

On 1 October 2019, large-scale anti-government protests broke out in Baghdad and the Southern provinces of Babil, Dhi Qar, Kerbala, Missan, Muthana, Najaf, Qadisiya and Wasit. Excessive force by the Iraqi security forces in repressing these protests caused 157 deaths and 5,494 injuries during the first week of October 2019, according to UNAMI figures.⁴⁷⁹ Dozens of protesters were arrested.⁴⁸⁰ The protest demonstrations resumed in Baghdad and the Southern provinces from 25 October 2019. Again, the Iraqi authorities committed human rights violations. Over the period from 25 October to 4 November 2019, at least 97 people were killed and thousands wounded, according to UNAMI.⁴⁸¹ In the provinces of Missan, Dhi Qar and Babil, among others, demonstrators were attacked by members of armed militias in order to prevent them from entering government buildings and/or party offices.⁴⁸²

⁴⁶⁵ The Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 01/07/2019, [url](#), pp. 18-23

⁴⁶⁶ The New York Times, 08/09/2018, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁷ CTC, 13/08/2019, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁸ EPIC, 15/08/2019, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁹ The New York Times, 22/10/2019, [url](#); Niqash, 03/12/2015, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁰ HRW, 22/07/2019, [url](#); Financial Times, 29/04/2019, [url](#); NRC, 19/02/2019, [url](#)

⁴⁷¹ Norwegian Refugee Council, 19/10/2018, [url](#)

⁴⁷² Al-Monitor, 09/08/2019, [url](#); EPIC, 08/08/2019, [url](#)

⁴⁷³ Niqash, 10/12/2015, [url](#); EPIC, 30/05/2019, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁴ Iraqi Red Crescent Society, 14/04/2019, [url](#); EPIC, 09/05/2019, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁵ Niqash, 14/11/2019, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁶ Niqash, 20/11/2019, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁷ EPIC, 27/06/2019, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁸ EPIC, 04/07/2019, [url](#); Kurdistan 24, 30/06/2019, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁹ UNAMI, 22/10/2019, p. 3, 4, 9, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁰ UNAMI, 22/10/2019, p. 6, [url](#)

⁴⁸¹ UNAMI, 05/11/2019, p. 2, [url](#)

⁴⁸² UNAMI, 05/11/2019, p. 3, [url](#)

Dozens of protesters have been detained.⁴⁸³ In the reporting period from 5 November to 9 December 2019, UNAMI identified further abuses against demonstrators in Baghdad and Southern Iraq, including beatings, arbitrary arrests and use of lethal force. During that period, 170 people were killed and 2,265 injured.⁴⁸⁴ Once again, militias appeared to be co-responsible for murders and kidnappings of demonstrators.⁴⁸⁵ According to Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, an independent human rights organisation with headquarters in Geneva and local offices in the Middle East, more than 500 people were killed and more than 17,000 injured between 1 October and 15 December 2019.⁴⁸⁶ On 23 January 2019, AI reported more than 600 deaths.⁴⁸⁷ According to the ICG, the PMF's Shia militias linked to Iran are primarily responsible for the disproportionate violence against demonstrators.⁴⁸⁸

According to figures published by a member of the IHCHR, by 30 January 2020 the death toll had risen to at least 536 (of which at least 17 were members of the security forces), 23,545 people were injured (3,519 were members of the security forces), 2,713 people were arrested (of whom only 328 are in detention) 72 demonstrators and activists were abducted (22 have been freed). This source also includes 49 attacks on demonstrators and activists, 22 of which resulted in the death of the victim, with 13 people injured, and a further 14 failed attacks.⁴⁸⁹

Another organisation that closely monitors the demonstrations and publishes regularly on social media is the NGO Iraqi War Crimes Documentation Center. This NGO has published on social media an overview of the deaths, injuries and arrests per province from 1 October to 31 December 2019:

Province	Arrested	Killed	Injured
Diwaniya	132	24	422
Najaf	122	42	401
Missan	11	26	234
Wasit	115	4	294
Dhi Qar	526	105	1,721
Babil	158	8	232
Basra	267	51	1,079
Karbala	357	13	1,053
Muthanna	12	1	323
Total	1,700	274	5,759

Iraqi War Crimes Documentation Center, Twitter Post, 14/01/2020⁴⁹⁰

The demonstrations continued in January 2020. Iraqi War Crimes Documentation Center published the following figures for the period from 1 to 20 January 2020: 191 injured, 40 killed, and 88 arrested.⁴⁹¹

In all southern provinces, protest demonstrations took place during the period under study. In the city of Nasiriya in particular, which is located in the province of Dhi Qar, numerous incidents have taken

⁴⁸³ UNAMI, 05/11/2019, p. 5, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁴ UNAMI, 03/12/2019, p. 2, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁵ UNAMI, 03/12/2019, p. 8, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁶ Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, 22/12/2019, p. 7, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁷ AI, 23/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁸ ICG, 01/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁹ Ali Albayati, member of IHCHR, Facebook, 02/02/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁰ Iraqi War Crimes Documentation Center, 14/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁹¹ Iraqi War Crimes Documentation Center, 23/01/2020, [url](#)

place and disproportionate violence was used. Among other things, the party buildings of the Shia militias associated with Iran was expressly targeted by the demonstrators. The oil refineries and other infrastructure of the oil industry were also targeted by demonstrators. Various civilian activists have been assassinated.⁴⁹² The prominent role of the city of Nasiriya in the protests is attributed to its rebellious history, support of the protesters by the local tribes and the limited influence of Moqtada al-Sadr in the region.⁴⁹³

Researcher Phillip Smyth of The Washington Institute notes that tribal culture plays an important role in the ongoing demonstrations in Iraq. Dissatisfied with the actions of the Shia militia, certain tribes take sides with the demonstrators and take the lead during demonstrations.⁴⁹⁴ Tribal leaders swear blood vengeance against members of the security forces and PMF militia who commit violence against demonstrators.⁴⁹⁵ However, Dr. Ranj Alaaldin, visiting fellow at the Brookings Institute, is of the opinion that the mass protest demonstrations have barely weakened the Shia militia's power in Iraq. Alaaldin expects increasing repression especially since Moqtada al-Sadr withdrew his support for the demonstrators.⁴⁹⁶

Overview of security incidents during demonstrations in Southern Iraq in 2019 and 2020 with civilian fatalities, by various sources

Dhi Qar

- On 1 October 2019, a demonstrator was killed and twenty others were injured in a confrontation with the security forces during a protest demonstration in Nasiriya.⁴⁹⁷
- On 2 October 2019, demonstrators in Nasiriya targeted the offices of various political movements in the city. As a consequence, tear gas and water cannons were used, as well as concentrated gunfire. From 1 to 5 October 2019, 19 demonstrators were killed by bullet wounds during the demonstrations in Nasiriya.⁴⁹⁸
- On 6 October 2019, around a hundred boys and men were arrested in Nasiriya by alleged militia members and taken to the Imam Ali army base. Most were released after four days.⁴⁹⁹
- On 25 October 2019, demonstrators attempting to enter the office of a political party were shot at in Nasiriya. Eight protesters were killed and at least 150 others were injured.⁵⁰⁰
- On 26 October 2019, police fired on a group of demonstrators heading towards the home of the Head of the Security Committee of the Dhi Qar Provincial Council. Three were killed and 27 wounded.⁵⁰¹
- On 11 November 2019, four people were killed and 130 injured in clashes between the security forces and demonstrators in Nasiriya.⁵⁰²
- On 15 November 2019, an IED exploded in a tent erected by demonstrators on Haboubi Square in Nasiriya. 18 people were wounded.⁵⁰³
- On 23 November 2019, demonstrators stormed the offices of the Dhi Qar oil company. They subsequently blocked the road to the Gharraf oil field.⁵⁰⁴

⁴⁹² See list of incidents below

⁴⁹³ Le Monde, 15/02/2020, [url](#); Al-Monitor, 19/11/2019, [url](#); Middle East Eye, 02/02/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁴ The Washington Institute, 04/12/2019, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁵ The Guardian, 30/11/2019, [url](#); Middle East Eye, 02/02/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁶ Brookings Institute, 31/01/2020, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁷ RFE/RL, 01/10/2019, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁸ UNAMI, 22/10/2019, p. 5, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁹ UNAMI, 22/10/2019, p. 7, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁰ UNAMI, 03/12/2019, p. 2, [url](#)

⁵⁰¹ UNAMI, 05/11/2019, p. 3, [url](#)

⁵⁰² RFE/RL, 11/11/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁰³ EPIC, 21/11/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁴ EPIC, 05/12/2019, [url](#)

- On 24 November 2019, four demonstrators were killed during an operation of the security forces in Nasiriya.⁵⁰⁵
- On 28 November 2019, security forces opened fire on a crowd of protesters at the Al-Zaitoun bridge in Nasiriya. 24 were killed and 200 wounded.⁵⁰⁶
- On 29 November 2019, demonstrations continued in Nasiriya against the excessive violence of the previous day. A group of demonstrators in front of a police station were shot at, resulting in 17 deaths and 300 wounded.⁵⁰⁷
- On 30 December 2019, a civilian activist was killed in Nasiriya.⁵⁰⁸
- On 5 January 2020, on Haboubi Square in Nasiriya, there were clashes between demonstrators and militia members of the Popular Mobilization Forces. Three protesters were shot, one of them died in hospital. A fire was started in a PMF office in the city.⁵⁰⁹
- On 13 January 2020, an activist was killed in Dhi Qar.⁵¹⁰
- On 5 February 2020, an IED attack was carried out on prominent civilian activist Dr Alaa al-Rikabi in the centre of Nasiriya. He escaped unscathed, but four others were injured.⁵¹¹
- On 10 February 2020, the security forces opened fire on a demonstration at the al-Ain University in Nasiriya. A demonstrator was killed.⁵¹²
- On 12 February 2020, demonstrators set fire to several bridges in Nasiriya, blocking access to government buildings. At least one demonstrator was killed, two others were abducted. There were also dozens of wounded.⁵¹³

Basra

- On 2 October 2019, unknown armed assailants killed two civilian activists in Basra. Both were killed in their homes after participating in a demonstration earlier that day.⁵¹⁴
- From 30 October to 7 November 2019, demonstrations took place in Basra at the port of Umm Qasr.⁵¹⁵ On 5 November 2019, the police opened fire on demonstrators blocking the road to the port. Two demonstrators were killed, more than a hundred others were injured.⁵¹⁶ On 7 November 2019, the security services took action against the demonstrators, resulting in at least thirty casualties. The port reopened on 9 November 2019.⁵¹⁷
- On 6 and 7 November 2019, demonstrators attempted to enter the housing complex of the governor of Basra. The response of the security forces resulted in the death of nine demonstrators, 150 others were injured.⁵¹⁸
- On 15 November 2019, there were fresh demonstrations at the port of Umm Qasr.⁵¹⁹
- On 24 November 2019, four demonstrators were killed and 70 injured when the security forces attempted to break their blockade of the road to Umm Qasr.⁵²⁰
- On 10 January 2020, unknown attackers killed two journalists in Basra. Earlier, one of them had reported arbitrary arrests of demonstrators.⁵²¹

⁵⁰⁵ EPIC, 05/12/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁶ UNAMI, 03/12/2019, p. 3, [url](#); AI, 28/11/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁷ UNAMI, 12/2019, p. 3, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁸ EPIC, 02/01/2020, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁹ EPIC, 09/01/2020, [url](#)

⁵¹⁰ EPIC, 16/01/2020, [url](#)

⁵¹¹ EPIC, 06/02/2020, [url](#)

⁵¹² EPIC, 13/02/2020, [url](#)

⁵¹³ EPIC, 13/02/2020, [url](#)

⁵¹⁴ UNAMI, 22/10/2019, p. 8, [url](#)

⁵¹⁵ EPIC, 14/11/2019, [url](#)

⁵¹⁶ UNAMI, 03/12/2019, p. 3, [url](#)

⁵¹⁷ EPIC, 21/11/2019, [url](#)

⁵¹⁸ UNAMI, 03/12/2019, p. 3, [url](#), p. 3

⁵¹⁹ EPIC, 05/12/2019, [url](#)

⁵²⁰ UNAMI, 03/12/2019, p. 3, [url](#)

⁵²¹ RSF, [url](#)

- On 23 January 2020, a civilian was shot and killed near a gathering spot for demonstrators in the centre of Basra.⁵²²

Missan

- On 2 October 2019, demonstrators set fire to the headquarters of the Islamic Supreme Council in Missan. The same day, four civilians and a policeman were killed, dozens of others were injured.⁵²³
- On 25 October 2019, armed men opened fire on a group of demonstrators attempting to force their way into the building of a political party. Twelve people were killed, at least 110 others were injured.⁵²⁴
- On 2 November 2019, a civilian activist was shot and wounded in Al-Amarrah.⁵²⁵
- On 6 November 2019, a civilian activist was shot dead in Al-Amarrah. Another activist was seriously injured.⁵²⁶
- On 29 November 2019, a civilian activist was shot dead in Al-Amarrah while returning home from a demonstration.⁵²⁷

Babil

- On 26 October 2019, militiamen opened fire on demonstrators storming their party office in Babil. Seven people were killed, at least twelve others were injured.⁵²⁸
- On 2 February 2020, four demonstrators were shot in Hilla. Another demonstrator was stabbed and died.⁵²⁹

Kerbala

- During the night of 28 to 29 October 2019, demonstrators in Kerbala were shot at with live rounds. According to certain sources, at least eighteen were killed and 143 injured. The next day, the provincial governor declared that there were no deaths.⁵³⁰
- On 4 November 2019, four demonstrators were killed in clashes between the security forces and demonstrators in Kerbala, twelve others were injured. The previous day, the Iranian consulate in the city had been attacked.⁵³¹
- On 8 December 2019, unknown gunmen killed a civilian activist in Kerbala.⁵³²
- On 13 January 2020, demonstrators set fire to a Badr warehouse in Kerbala. During the subsequent clashes with the security services, ten demonstrators were injured.⁵³³
- On 20 January 2020, the police opened fire on a sit-in by students in Kerbala. Two students were killed, fifty others were injured.⁵³⁴

Najaf

- On 2 October 2019, demonstrators set fire to the party offices of Dawaa and Hikma.⁵³⁵
- On 3 October 2019, demonstrators storming the Iranian consulate in Najaf were shot at by the security forces.⁵³⁶

⁵²² EPIC, 23/01/2020, [url](#)

⁵²³ EPIC, 03/10/2019, [url](#)

⁵²⁴ UNAMI, 12/11/2019, p. 3, [url](#)

⁵²⁵ UNAMI, 03/12/2019, p. 6, [url](#)

⁵²⁶ UNAMI, 03/12/2019, p. 6, [url](#)

⁵²⁷ UNAMI, 03/12/2019, p. 6, [url](#)

⁵²⁸ UNAMI, 05/11/2019, p. 3, [url](#)

⁵²⁹ Musings on Iraq, 12/02/2020, [url](#)

⁵³⁰ UNAMI, 11/2019, p. 3, [url](#)

⁵³¹ RFE/RL, 04/11/2019, [url](#)

⁵³² Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, 22/12/2019, p. 12, [url](#)

⁵³³ EPIC, 16/01/2020, [url](#)

⁵³⁴ EPIC, 23/01/2020, [url](#)

⁵³⁵ EPIC, 03/10/2019, [url](#)

⁵³⁶ EPIC, 03/10/2019, [url](#)

- On 27 November 2019, demonstrators set fire to the Iranian consulate in Najaf. In response, militiamen from the PMF shot 27 demonstrators dead between 27 and 30 November 2019.⁵³⁷
- On 1 December 2019, demonstrators once again set fire to the Iranian consulate in Najaf.⁵³⁸
- On 5 February 2020, the *blue hats*, supporters of Moqtada al-Sadr who initially ensured security during demonstrations, took action against demonstrators in Najaf. Eleven protesters were killed, and 122 others were injured.⁵³⁹
- On 18 January 2020, demonstrators set fire to the offices of Kata'ib Hezbollah in Najaf.⁵⁴⁰
- On 5 February 2020, eight demonstrators were killed in clashes between supporters of Moqtada al-Sadr and demonstrators in Najaf. A hundred more were injured.⁵⁴¹

Muthanna

- On 25 October 2019, demonstrators set fire to the party offices of AAH and National Wisdom (Hikma), led by Ammar al-Hakim, in Samawa.⁵⁴²

Qadisiya

- On 10 December 2019, demonstrators blocked access to the Shanafiya refinery in Qadisiya.⁵⁴³

6.7.3. Security incidents

Only a limited number of security incidents that occurred in Southern Iraq during the period under study are attributed to ISIS. In the province of Babil, around Jurf al-Sakhr, there are occasional attacks with IEDs on PMF militiamen. In August 2019, dozens of people were injured in an attack with an IED in the city of Musayyab, located in Babil. In September 2019, ISIS claimed responsibility for an attack on Kerbala, in which twelve people were killed.⁵⁴⁴ Occasional shootings and assassinations are also reported in Southern Iraq. Usually the identity of the perpetrators of these acts of violence is unknown.⁵⁴⁵ According to the Dutch *Ambtsbericht*, the violence in Southern Iraq is more tribal and/or criminal than terrorist. It includes inter- or intra-tribal disputes, drug-related crime and honour-related violence.⁵⁴⁶ Another form of violence in Southern Iraq, particularly in the province of Basra, is violence against things or persons considered *haram* (forbidden) by conservative Islamic groups.⁵⁴⁷ For example, the Dutch *Ambtsbericht* highlighted an attack on a bus which transported female employees of a coffee house to work. This attack, which took place in September 2019, was accompanied by a threatening letter. The *Ambtsbericht* made no mention of casualties.⁵⁴⁸

A map of Southern Iraq showing the incidents involving explosives recorded by EPIC from March 2019 to January 2020, and all incidents recorded by ACLED from 1 January 2019 to 31 January 2020, shows the following image:

⁵³⁷ UNAMI, 03/12/2019, p. 3, [url](#)

⁵³⁸ RFE/RL, 01/12/2019, [url](#)

⁵³⁹ Musings on Iraq, 12/02/2020, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁰ EPIC, 23/01/2020, [url](#)

⁵⁴¹ EPIC, 06/02/2020, [url](#)

⁵⁴² Reuters, 25/10/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁴³ EPIC, 12/12/2019, [url](#)

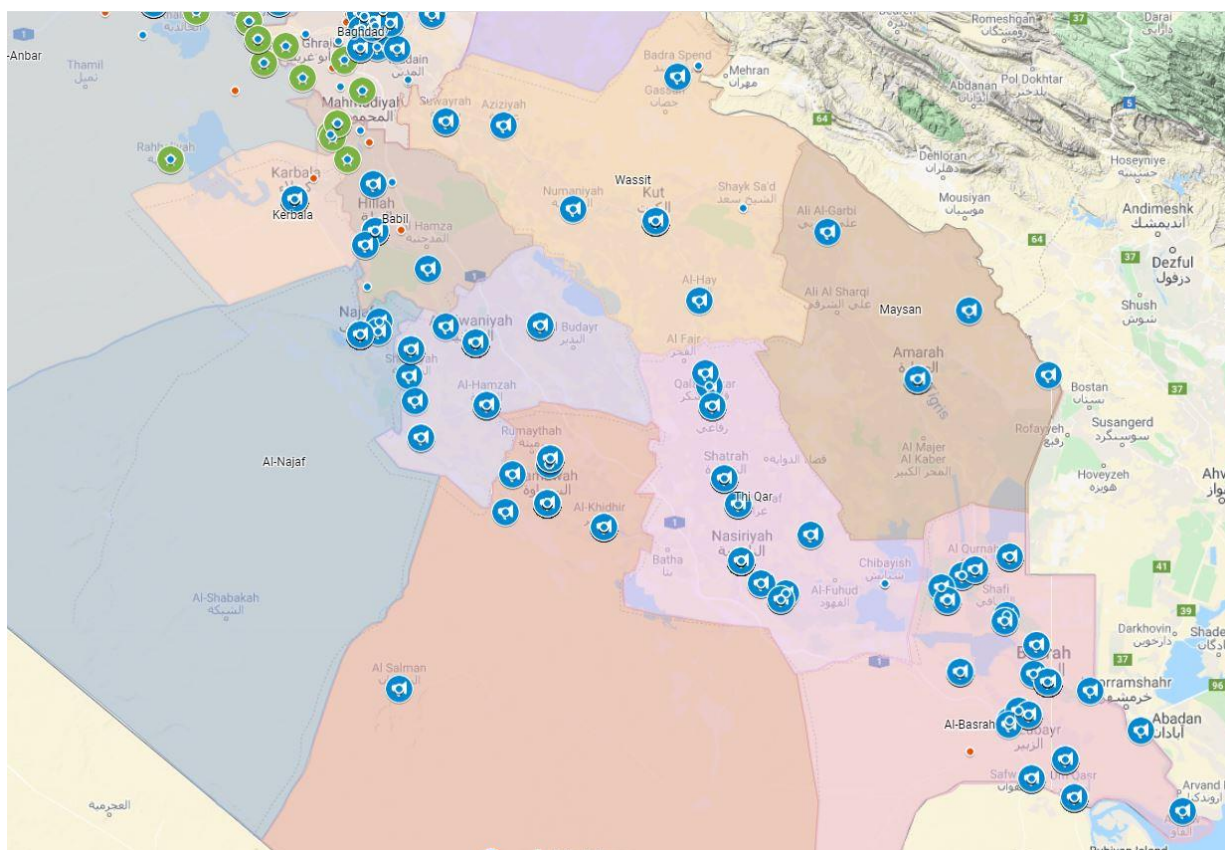
⁵⁴⁴ See list of incidents below

⁵⁴⁵ See list of incidents from ACLED below

⁵⁴⁶ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20/12/2019, p. 21, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁷ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20/12/2019, p. 23, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁸ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20/12/2019, p. 23, [url](#)



EPIC, attacks with explosives, 28/02/2019-16/01/2020; ACLED, all incidents, 01/01/2019 - 31/01/2020 (red dots = EPIC, green symbols = ACLED, attacks by ISIS, blue megaphone = demonstrations, blue dots = all events recorded by ACLED)⁵⁴⁹

In the spring of 2019, the peace organisation PAX surveyed the opinions of the population of the province of Basra on the security situation in the region. 64% of the respondents did not see any noticeable improvement compared to 2018. Almost half the respondents indicated that they or their immediate family members had experienced one or more violent situations during the past year. Many respondents mentioned honour killings, forced marriages and child marriages. At the same time, the number of robberies, murders and kidnappings, which the respondents had witnessed or were victims of, fell.⁵⁵⁰ One of the causes of the criminal violence in Basra is the import of drugs, in particular crystal meth.⁵⁵¹

Overview of security incidents in Southern Iraq in 2019 and 2020 with civilian fatalities, according to EPIC

Basra

- On 12 March 2019, a confrontation between the Albu Hamdan and the al-Batut tribes north of Basra resulted in three deaths and at least seven wounded.⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁹ EPIC, 22/01/2020, [url](#); ACLED, compilation by Cedoca on Google Maps, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁰ PAX, 19/12/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁵¹ The New York Times, 14/09/2019, [url](#); Reuters, 09/04/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁵² EPIC, 14/03/2019, [url](#)

- On 3 June 2019, unidentified armed assailants attacked the headquarters of Dawa in Basra. A day earlier, an attack had taken place on a communist party office in the city.⁵⁵³
- On 19 June 2019, three people were injured in a rocket attack on the installations of several international oil companies in Burjesia, located in Basra.⁵⁵⁴
- On 6 October 2019, unidentified armed assailants killed two local politicians in the region of Bahar, south of Basra.⁵⁵⁵
- On 14 January 2020, unknown gunmen on motorcycles killed two civilians in the centre of Basra.⁵⁵⁶
- On 6 February 2020, a leading supporter of Moqtada al-Sadr was murdered in Basra.⁵⁵⁷
- On 10 February 2020, unknown gunmen killed a port official at his home in Basra.⁵⁵⁸

Babil

- On 30 May 2019, two members of the PMF were shot in the region of Jurf al-Sakhr.⁵⁵⁹
- On 7 July 2019, four members of the PMF were killed in an attack on their vehicle on the road from Babil to Baghdad.⁵⁶⁰
- On 23 August 2019, 39 people were injured in an attack with an IED in the city of Musayyab, located in Babil.⁵⁶¹
- On 6 September 2019, a PMF militia member was killed in an attack with an IED in Jurf al-Sakhr.⁵⁶²
- On 20 November 2019, a former provincial councillor was murdered in the Abi Gharq district, west of Hilla.⁵⁶³
- On 7 December 2019, two members of the PMF were injured in an attack with an IED on a control post in Jurf al-Sakhr.⁵⁶⁴

Karbala

- On 27 July 2019, a civilian was killed in an attack on a bus on the road from Baghdad to Kerbala.⁵⁶⁵
- On 20 September 2019, twelve people were killed in Kerbala in an attack with an IED. Five others were injured. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.⁵⁶⁶
- On 11 January 2020, unknown gunmen killed a shopkeeper in al-Qadisiyah, located in Kerbala.⁵⁶⁷

Najaf

- On 11 January 2020, unidentified gunmen killed two civilians in the Wadi al-Salam cemetery in Najaf.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁵³ EPIC, 06/06/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁴ Reuters, 19/06/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁵ EPIC, 03/10/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁶ EPIC, 16/01/2020, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁷ EPIC, 06/02/2020, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁸ EPIC, 13/02/2020, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁹ EPIC, 06/06/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁰ EPIC, 11/07/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁶¹ EPIC, 29/08/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁶² EPIC, 12/09/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁶³ EPIC, 21/11/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁴ EPIC, 12/12/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁵ EPIC, 01/08/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁶ EPIC, 26/09/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁷ EPIC, 16/01/2020, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁸ EPIC, 16/01/2020, [url](#)

Dhi Qar

- On 22 January 2020, a member of the PMF was shot and killed in Nasiriya.⁵⁶⁹

Qadisiya

- On 27 January 2020, unidentified gunmen killed a civilian in the Zaytoun district, east of Diwaniyah.⁵⁷⁰

Missan

- On 4 February 2020, an assassination attempt of a prominent supporter of Moqtada al-Sadr took place in the Rammaneh neighbourhood of Amara. The man died the next day from his injuries.⁵⁷¹

Overview by ACLED of security incidents in Southern Iraq in 2019 and 2020 with civilian fatalities, outside the context of the demonstrations⁵⁷²

This table only contains the incidents in which civilians were killed outside the demonstrations, attacks on activists in the context of the demonstrations are not included:

Date	Govern.	District	Location	Source	Notes	Fat.
30/01/2019	Muthanna	As Salman	As Salman	Yaqein	On Jan 30, 1 civilian was killed by an unidentified landmine explosion in Kharang area of Nahiyat al Busayyah (aka al Salman) district in al Muthanna province.	1
02/02/2019	Kerbala	Kerbala	Kerbala	Front Line Defenders	On Feb 2, a prominent writer and journalist was shot and killed near his home in Kerbala by unknown gunmen. The killing is thought to be related to his critique of corruption in Iraq in his recent book.	1
19/04/2019	Basrah	Basrah	Basrah	Yaqein	On Apr 19, unidentified armed men fired shots at a police officer, killing him in central Basra city as he came out of his house.	1
23/08/2019	Babylon	Musayab	Musayab	Al Maloomah; Telegram; Xinhua; Sotaliraq; AP	On Aug 23, an IS planted IED on a parked motorcycle exploded in al Musayb near a Shia mosque (targeting mainly Shias), northern Babylon province, killing 4 civilians and injuring 30 others.	4

⁵⁶⁹ EPIC, 23/01/2020, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁰ EPIC, 30/01/2020, [url](#)

⁵⁷¹ EPIC, 06/02/2020, [url](#)

⁵⁷² ACLED, update consulted via export tool: 01/02/2020, [url](#)

20/09/2019	Kerbala	Kerbala	Kerbala	AP	On Sept 20, an IS planted bomb exploded targeting a minibus packed with passengers outside the city of Kerbala, killing 12 people and wounding five others.	12
03/10/2019	Basrah	Basrah	Basrah	Front Line Defenders; Basnews	On Oct 03, unknown armed men shot and killed Iraqi cartoonist and political activist Hussein Adel al-Maddani and his wife in Basra city, as protests overtook the streets. Motivation unclear for the attack, and no one has claimed responsibility.	2
08/10/2019	Muthanna	As Samawah	As Samawah	Al Mirbad	Explosive remnants of war: On Oct 08, 1 person was killed in the explosion of an unidentified war remnant IED in al Badiyah area (coded at the provincial capital of al Muthanna).	1
13/12/2019	Basrah	Basrah	Basrah	Al Ghad Press	On Dec 13, armed men in a vehicle shot and killed a civilian in Basra province.	1
16/12/2019	Basrah	Basrah	Basrah	Rudaw	On Dec 16, unknown armed men reportedly killed four members of the same family at their home in central Basra. The motive behind the attack is unclear.	4
27/12/2019	Basrah	Al-Zubair	Al-Zubair	Al Sumaria TV	On Dec 27, unidentified armed men on a motorcycle shot at a civilian in al Zubair district in Basrah province.	1
11/01/2020	Najaf	Najaf	Najaf	Al Ghad Press	On 11 January, 2020, an unknown armed group riding a motorbike, opened fire on civilians in Wadi Alsalam cemetery in the center of Najaf city, killing 2 men, and severely injured the other.	2
11/01/2020	Kerbala	Kerbala	Kerbala	Al Ghad Press	On 11 January, 2020, an unknown armed group, opened fire on a civilian in AlQadisiya neighbourhood, in Kerbala city, killing him.	1
13/01/2020	Thi-Qar	Suq Al-Shoyokh	Akaika	Al Ghad Press; NRT News	On 13 January, 2020, an unknown armed group riding a motorbike opened fire on a civilian with silenced guns in Akaika south of Nassriya city in	1

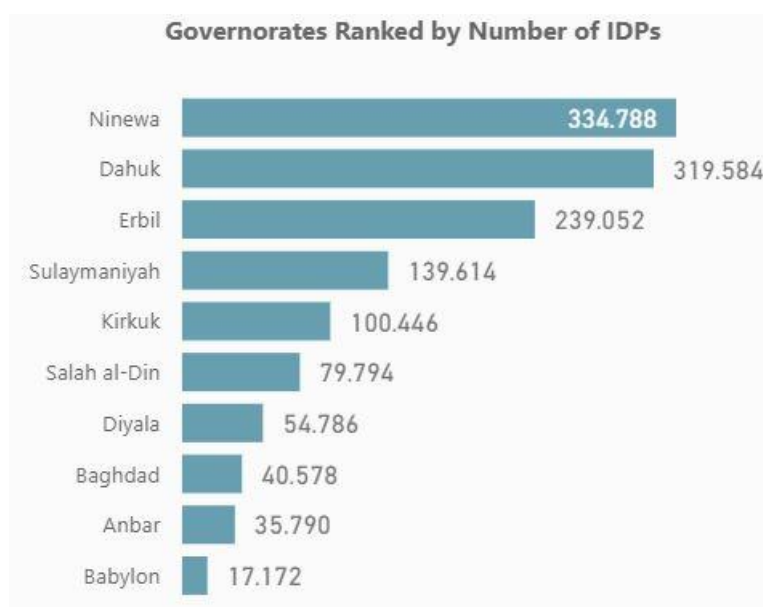
					Thi-Qar province killing him.	
14/01/2020	Basrah	Basrah	Basrah	Al Ghad Press	On 14 January, 2020, an unknown armed group riding a motorbike attacked and killed 2 people in Al Wofod street in Basrah city.	2
17/01/2020	Thi-Qar	Rifai	Rifai	Al Ghad Press	On 17 January, 2020, an unknown armed group opened fire killing a civilian in Rifai city, in Thi-Qar province.	1
22/01/2020	Basrah	Basrah	Basrah	Al Mirbad	On Jan 22, unidentified armed men in a vehicle shot and killed 1 civilian and injured another in central Basra city.	1
22/01/2020	Thi-Qar	Nassriya	Nassriya	Al Mirbad	On Jan 22, a civilian was killed after he was shot by an unidentified armed group in a vehicle in Nassriya city.	1
27/01/2020	Qadissiya	Diwaniya	Diwaniya	Al Sumaria TV	On Jan 27, unidentified men shot and killed a civilian in Diwaniyah city.	1

7. Displacement of the population

7.1. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnees

The IOM reports on the evolution of the numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)⁵⁷³ and *returnees*⁵⁷⁴ in Iraq by means of a Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), which is regularly updated via the following internet page: <http://iraqdtm.iom.int>.

The IOM reports that Iraq had 1,414,632 IDPs as of 31 December 2019. The IOM also reports that 4,596,450 of the Iraqi citizens who were displaced since January 2014 have returned to their region of origin.⁵⁷⁵ The regularly updated DTM Displacement Dashboards show that in 2020, Ninewa is the province with the highest number of IDPs (334,788). The Kurdish provinces of Dohuk and Erbil are also home to substantial numbers of IDPs, 319,584 and 239,052 respectively:



IOM, Displacement overview, 31/12/2019⁵⁷⁶

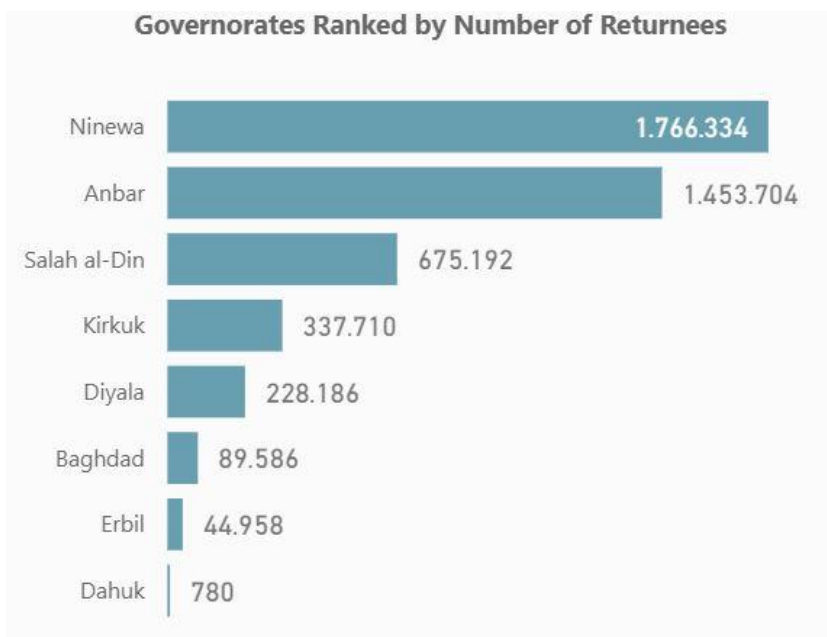
The regularly updated DTM Return Dashboards show that the province of Ninewa is the province where most returns are registered: 1,766,334 returnees, of which 1,020,336 to Mosul. As of 31 December 2019, 1,453,704 displaced persons had returned to Anbar province, of whom 571,056 to Ramadi and 537,024 to Fallujah:

⁵⁷³ In the DTM, an IDP is defined as an Iraqi citizen who was displaced after 1 January 2014 and who sought refuge within the country's borders.

⁵⁷⁴ A returnee is defined in the DTM as an IDP that returned to the region or subdistrict where they lived before being displaced, whether or not they returned to their original home address.

⁵⁷⁵ IOM, website, [url](#), consulted on 19/02/2019

⁵⁷⁶ IOM, 31/12/2019, [url](#)



IOM, Return overview, 31/12/2019⁵⁷⁷

The IOM notes that the general living conditions of IDPs and returnees have improved compared to 2018. 87% of IDPs and 79% of returnees stay in places where the main basic services are available. Approximately half of the IDPs and returnees have adequate access to these facilities.⁵⁷⁸

In addition to the numerous IDPs, Iraqi refugees from Syria and Turkey have also returned to their region of origin. Iraqi citizens from Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany have returned to their region of origin as well.⁵⁷⁹ The IOM supports and facilitates the return of Iraqi citizens to Iraq. This assistance includes picking someone upon arrival at the airport, training courses for integration and return to the labour market, and financial or material support.⁵⁸⁰

7.2. Rate of return

According to the IOM, the rate of return varies considerably from province to province. For example, around 90% of IDPs from the province of Anbar have now returned to their region of origin, while the rate of return to the province of Salah al- Din is 75% and that to the province of Ninevah 64%:⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁷ IOM, 31/12/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁸ IOM, 03/02/2020, p. 49, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁹ IOM, 03/02/2020, pp. 49, 51, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁰ IOM, 03/02/2020, [url](#)

⁵⁸¹ IOM, 03/02/2020, p. 5, [url](#)

	Returnees May 2018	Returnees June 2019	% change May 2017–June 2019	% change May 2018–June 2019	% of returns as of June 2019	Rate of return June 2019
Anbar	1,264,890	1,305,456	63%	3%	30%	89%
Baghdad	77,046	88,170	188%	14%	2%	69%
Dahuk	780	780	> 200%	0%	0%	3%
Diyala	221,598	225,474	10%	2%	5%	73%
Erbil	39,006	41,070	14%	5%	1%	68%
Kirkuk	293,334	330,882	> 200%	13%	8%	76%
Ninewa	146,424	1,677,912	> 200%	15%	39%	64%
Salah al-Din	543,456	635,394	50%	17%	15%	75%
Total/Average	3,904,350	4,305,138	133%	10%	100%	73%

 IOM, Return, yearly rate of change and rate of return, 2020⁵⁸²

The IOM also indicates that there are no returns to certain regions. It did not register a single return during the period January 2014 to July 2019 to Al-Musayab (Babil), Hilla (Babil), Adhamia (Baghdad), Al-Resafa (Baghdad), Karkh (Baghdad), Mada'in (Baghdad), Baladroz (Diyala), Baquba (Diyala) and Al-Thetar (Salah al- Din).⁵⁸³

The rate of return to some regions is low. For example, only 17% of IDPs from Sinjar (Nineveh) returned to their region of origin. The rate of return to Al-Ba'aj (Nineveh) is only 8%, to Hatra (Nineveh) 30%, to Al Ka'im (Anbar) 61%, to Kifri (Diyala) 50%, to Al-Fares (Salah al-Din) 50%, to Tooz (Salah al-Din) 49% and to Balad (Salah al-Din) 57%.⁵⁸⁴

In other regions, the rate of return rises to almost 90%. In Falluja (Anbar) the return rate is 89%, in Ramadi (Anbar) 84%, in Al-Khalis (Diyala) 87%, in Kirkuk city (Kirkuk) 81%, in Al-Hamdaniya (Nineveh) 80%, in Tilkaif (Nineveh) 83%, in Samarra (Salah al- Din) 79% and in Tikrit (Salah al-Din) 88%.⁵⁸⁵

The ethno-religious composition of returnees by province is as follows, according to IOM figures:

GOVERNORATE	ETHNO-RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION						Total
	Arab Sunni Muslims	Kurd Muslims (Sunni and Shia)	Yazidis	Turkmen Muslims (Sunni and Shia)	Minorities (Christians, Kakais, Shabak Shia)	Arab Shia Muslims	
Anbar	98%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	100%
Baghdad	89%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%	100%
Dahuk	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	100%
Diyala	90%	4%	0%	3%	0%	3%	100%
Erbil	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Kirkuk	49%	49%	0%	1%	0%	0%	100%
Ninewa	64%	3%	5%	12%	16%	0%	100%
Salah al-Din	93%	4%	0%	1%	0%	1%	100%
Total	79%	6%	2%	5%	6%	1%	100%

 IOM, Ethno-religious composition (% of returnees), 2020⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸² IOM, 03/02/2020, p. 12, [url](#)

⁵⁸³ IOM, 03/02/2020, p. 14, [url](#)

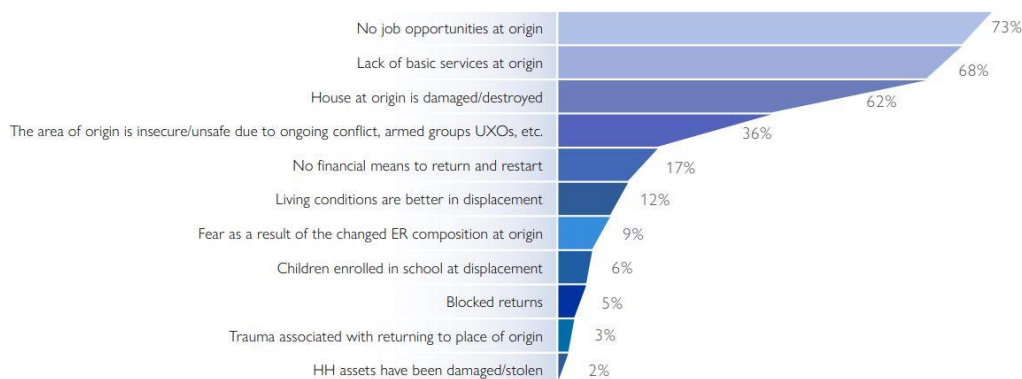
⁵⁸⁴ IOM, 03/02/2020, p. 14, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁵ IOM, 18/04/2019, p. 12, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁶ IOM, 03/02/2020, p. 62, [url](#)

7.3. Obstacles to return

Studies by the IOM into the various reasons why IDPs do not return to their region of origin show that the lack of employment, basic services and housing are most often cited as obstacles to return. The uncertain security situation in the region of origin is also regularly cited as a reason for not returning, albeit less frequently than in similar studies in previous years⁵⁸⁷. 9% of IDPs indicate that they do not return because the ethno-religious population composition in their region of origin has changed:

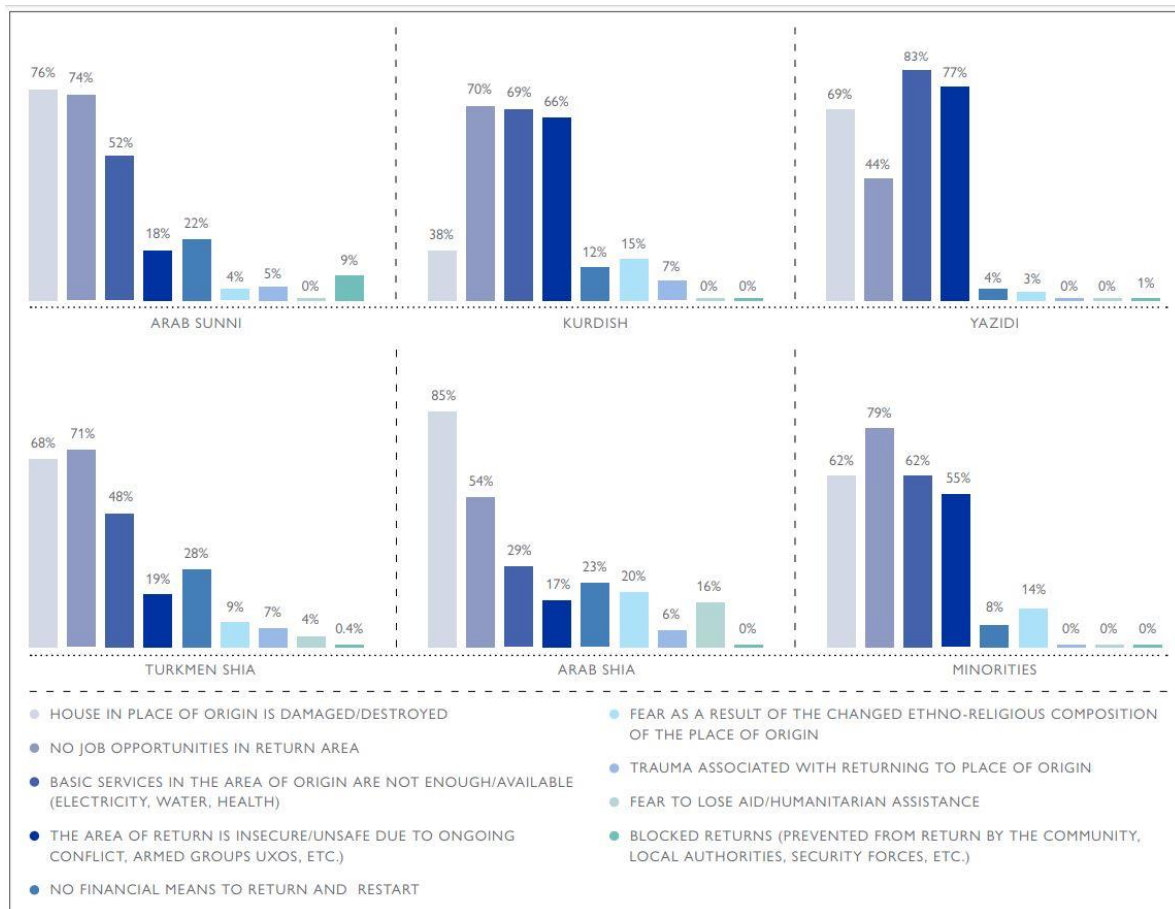


IOM, Obstacles to return, 2020⁵⁸⁸

Depending on the ethno-sectarian profile of the IDPs, the reasons for not returning to the region of origin vary. For example, Sunni-Arab IDPs mainly cite the lack of housing, employment and basic services as reasons not to return. In addition, 9% of them have indicated that they did not return because the local community, local authorities and/or security actors blocked them. Other ethno-sectarian groups of IDPs barely invoke this reason. Kurdish IDPs are less likely to cite damage to their homes as a reason not to return. Much more often than Sunni Arabs, they invoke the insecurity in their region of origin as a reason not to return. The main reasons for Yezidis not to return are the lack of basic services and the uncertain security situation in their region of origin. The main reason for Turkmen Shias not to return is lack of employment, while Arab Shias mainly invoke the damage or destruction of their homes. Other minorities also cite lack of employment as the main reason for not returning. The damage to their former homes, the lack of basic facilities and the uncertain security situation are also often cited as reasons for not returning to the region of origin:

⁵⁸⁷ IOM, 03/02/2020, p. 22, [url](#); IOM, 02/01/2019, p. 24, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁸ IOM, 03/02/2020, p. 21, [url](#)



IOM, Obstacles to return by ethno-religious group (% of location), 2020⁵⁸⁹

In the report *Reasons to remain: an in-depth analysis of the main districts of origin*, published by the IOM in April 2019, the latter lists the obstacles to return invoked according to the district from which IDPs originate. These tables show, for example, that 14,316 IDPs from Ramadi have been registered, of whom only 471 are living in refugee camps. The vast majority of IDPs from Ramadi do not return because their homes have been destroyed. Approximately one third have not returned to Ramadi due to the impossibility of making a living. Nearly 20% have not returned to Ramadi because the security services are not sufficiently present there.⁵⁹⁰ Furthermore, the IOM calculates that 49,213 IDPs from Sinjar have not yet returned. 28,804 of them are housed in a refugee camp. The destruction of their homes, the inability to provide for their livelihoods and the limited presence of security forces in the region are the main reasons for IDPs in this district not to return home.⁵⁹¹ The report also lists the main obstacles to return for IDPs from other districts.

In February 2019, the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPI), a Berlin-based independent think tank, reported that return may be hindered by the various Local, Hybrid and Sub-state Security Forces (LHSF) operating in Iraq. Such local security actors, not under the direct control of the Iraqi government, are not only responsible for human rights violations that have forced the inhabitants of certain regions to flee, but in some cases also hinder the return of IDPs.⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁹ IOM 03/02/2020, p. 45, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁰ IOM, 18/04/2019, pp. 13-14, [url](#)

⁵⁹¹ IOM, 18/04/2019, p. 13, [url](#)

⁵⁹² GPPI, 18/02/2019, [url](#)

For example, the PMF used violence against Sunni IDPs and denied them return to their region of origin:

"Whether because of their sectarian tendencies and reputation or simply as a result of their greater capacity to inflict harm, as these Shi'a PMF groups entered Sunni-majority areas during the liberation or stabilization campaigns, allegations of abuse, discrimination against Sunni communities, and extreme violence followed them. This included frequent instances of mistreatment of IDPs, forced displacement and blocked returns. The biggest share of the allegations concerned AAH and the Hezbollah Brigades, although there were also reports of abuse involving the Badr Organization, the Khorasani Brigades, or other Shi'a PMF units".⁵⁹³

In Tal Afar, Shirqat, Baiji, Tikrit, Dour and Tuz Khurmatu, among others, there have been reports of abuse by Popular Mobilization Forces, including impeding the return of IDPs. At the same time, GPPI indicates that the majority of such abuses took place in the period immediately following the recapture of the areas concerned. In Tikrit and Dour, for example, serious human rights abuses took place after liberation, but reports of abuses subsequently diminished and people started returning to these regions. However, the presence of the PMF in and around Tikrit remained a reason for some IDPs not to return.⁵⁹⁴ In other regions, too, the presence of the PMF was an obstacle to return. In Baiji district (Salah al- Din) the PMF had caused considerable damage. In addition, there were reports that IDPs and returnees were detained and mistreated at checkpoints.⁵⁹⁵ Also in Jurf al-Sakhr, located in Babil, and a number of areas in Diyala, the PMF blocked the return of Sunni IDPs.⁵⁹⁶ At the same time, the presence of the PMF in many other regions was scaled back and law enforcement was transferred to regular armed forces. This had a positive impact on the return of IDPs.⁵⁹⁷

GPPI also reports that numerous local, smaller militias have been established in the Central Iraqi provinces that have been incorporated into or collaborate with the PMF. In theory, the field knowledge of these local security actors means that the local population can be better protected, but this does not always appear to be the case:

"(...) In practice, these local roots came with local ambitions, interests and grudges. Many of these local forces were mobilized along sectarian, ethnic or political lines in mixed or divided communities. Instead of protecting the local population, many of these groups used their positions of authority to exact revenge or disadvantage rival individuals or groups. IDPs or returnees, who were frequently in a vulnerable position, often bore the brunt of such retaliation."⁵⁹⁸

In Tuz, Kirkuk, Tikrit, Shirqat, Qaraqosh, Sinjar and other locations on the Nineveh Plain, among others, the presence of local militias is an obstacle to the return of IDPs. In Amerli, located in Tuz, Salah al-Din, Shia, Turkmen families returned soon after the liberation of the region. However, the presence of a Shia, Turkmen PMF militia prevented the return of Sunni Turkmen and Arabs. In Bashir, located in Kirkuk, the same was observed: a local Shia, Turkmen PMF militia forbade Sunni Arabs to return. In the south of the Nineveh Plain, a local Shabak PMF militia blocked Christians and Sunni Arabs from returning. Hardly anyone has returned to the Christian city of Qaraqash, partly because of distrust of Shabak militias in the region.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹³ GPPI, 18/02/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁴ GPPI, 18/02/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁵ GPPI, 18/02/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁶ GPPI, 18/02/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁷ GPPI, 18/02/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁸ GPPI, 18/02/2019, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁹ GPPI, 18/02/2019, [url](#)

Moreover, the return of IDPs is monitored by numerous security actors who carry out their own screening and are extremely arbitrary in their decisions:

"(...) Many of these security actors maintained their own databases of suspected ISIL affiliates and each family member had to receive clearance from all databases. Not only was this process lengthy, but the databases often contradicted each other and the process by which an individual might be blacklisted was unclear. (...) In addition to adding to the overall cacophony of overlapping vetting lists and databases, LHSFs made the application of vetting even more irregular at the point of return. Many LHSFs were in control of checkpoints, which is where the final decision on whether permission to return or to pass through a transit point en route to return would be permitted. Although in theory all LHSFs manning checkpoints would have had the same lists of who was authorized to return, and regular procedures for permitting return, in practice, the ways that these rules were implemented was as numerous as the LHSFs themselves. This was partly to do with multiple lists of vetted individuals as well as the fact that they were poorly updated. But it is also because many LHSF forces at checkpoints applied their own rules and scrutiny."⁶⁰⁰

7.4. Forced return in 2019

In August and September 2019, 300 families who found refuge in Nineveh province were forced to leave certain refugee camps in the province. The people involved were returned to Anbar, Kirkuk and Salah al-Din, despite the fears they expressed for their personal safety. A number of families did not pass the security screening of the authorities in Anbar and are again displaced. IDPs escorted to Kirkuk have mentioned threatening phone calls and the confiscation of identity documents. Following the arrival of a number of IDPs in a refugee camp in Salah al-Din, three hand grenades were detonated. Threats have also been made on social media.⁶⁰¹

7.5. UNHCR advice

In November 2019, UNHCR published its *Country of Origin Information on Access and Residency Requirements in Iraq*. In this report, UNHCR explains the conditions under which persons from the former ISIS area can enter and reside outside their original region of origin. For example, former residents of the ISIS area, especially Sunni Arabs, need a sponsor to gain access to the provinces of Missan, Muthana and Dohuk. For access to the provinces of Babil, Baghdad, Basra, Diyala, Erbil, Kerbala, Kirkuk, Najaf, Qadisiyah, Sulaymaniyah or Wasit, this requirement does not apply (anymore). In order to settle elsewhere in Iraq, former inhabitants of the ISIS area invariably undergo security screening. Depending on the place of resettlement, a sponsor and/or a recommendation from the *mukhtar* and/or the local government is required.⁶⁰²

In May 2019, the UNHCR published the report *International Protection Considerations with Regard to People Fleeing the Republic of Iraq*. Their position on return to ISIS-controlled areas and/or areas where ISIS remains present is as follows:

"In light of widespread destruction and damage to homes, basic infrastructure and agricultural lands, limited access to livelihoods and basic services, the contamination of homes and lands with ERW ongoing community tensions, including reprisal acts against civilians perceived to be supporting ISIS, as well as localized insecurity, UNHCR urges States to refrain from forcibly returning persons who originate from areas previously controlled by ISIS or areas with a

⁶⁰⁰ GPPI, 18/02/2019, [url](#)

⁶⁰¹ UN OCHA, 02/09/2019, [url](#)

⁶⁰² UNHCR, 06/11/2019, [url](#)

continued ISIS presence to their areas of origin. UNHCR also advises against the forcible return of these persons to other parts of Iraq if there is a risk that they may not be able to access to and/or reside in these areas, or that they will otherwise end up in a situation where they have no choice but to return to their area of origin."⁶⁰³

⁶⁰³ UNHCR, 12/11/2019, p. 128, [url](#)

Summary

During the period studied for this COI Focus, there was a further drop in violence by the remnants of the former Islamic State (ISIS), which has not maintained permanent control over territory in Iraq since November 2017. As of 2019 and early 2020, ISIS was primarily a rural phenomenon, hiding in inaccessible areas of Central Iraq, from where it carries out attacks on the security forces and also on civilians. Since the loss of its last remaining territory in Iraq, ISIS has been pursuing a guerrilla strategy, primarily carrying out targeted attacks on positions of the Iraqi army, police and PMF in the provinces of Central Iraq and the rural outlying areas of Baghdad Province. ISIS also targets people who perform some form of security function, such as police personnel or *mukhtars* who are well informed about their village or neighbourhood. These persons and their families are the victims of targeted executions. Large-scale attacks, with or without suicide bombers, have become exceptional. Currently, the majority of victims are counted among combatants from both sides rather than among the civilian population.

The trend towards diminished violence by ISIS is clear across the country. In Baghdad, attacks have been greatly reduced, while throughout Southern Iraq, the terrorist organisation is virtually absent. There are occasional local flare-ups, particularly in Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah al-Din where the frequency of ISIS attacks is still relatively high, but nowhere is it comparable to the period from 2013 to 2016. The (total) number of attacks and casualties is significantly lower.

Demonstrations by civilians against corruption and dysfunctional infrastructure are an annual phenomenon in Iraq. After relatively quiet summer months, serious demonstrations erupted in Baghdad and Southern Iraq in early October 2019. As in the summer of 2018, the government and pro-Iranian militias attempted to crush the protests by force. But despite the use of water cannons, tear gas and gunfire against the mostly young demonstrators (half of the Iraqi population is under 25 years old), the protests did not abate and the demonstrators' demands became more radical: they called for the resignation of the entire political class and demanded new administrators not rooted in the system of power sharing between the ethnic and religious power blocks (*Muhasasa*).

Hundreds of civilians were killed and thousands wounded during the protests. Thousands of protesters were also arrested and mistreated. Dozens of activists were kidnapped or murdered, and the media who covered the demonstrations extensively were threatened and attacked. What started as a student protest movement against high youth unemployment and against the dismissal of a popular commander of the Counterterrorism Forces grew into a broad movement with considerable popular support that shook the political system to its foundations.

The repression of the demonstrations was carried out by the army and police as well as by pro-Iranian militias that receive material and logistical support from Iran. Since 1 October 2019, there have been more victims throughout the country during these demonstrations than as a result of ISIS.

Iran plays a very active role in Iraq, and the increasing escalation of the conflict between the US and Iran has a strong political influence in Iraq. The US and Iran both have a military presence in the country. In the course of 2019, there were repeated reciprocal attacks within Iraq between the US and the pro-Iranian militias, and in one case directly from Iran. Israel also launched strikes at installations of the pro-Iranian militia in Iraq. Turkey carried out several air raids on positions of Kurdish militia in Sinjar.

The deadly US attack on Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in Baghdad was the peak of the confrontation, but tensions and reciprocal attacks continue. From a political perspective, there are strong calls in Iraq for an end to foreign military interference in the country. The pro-Iranian Shias primarily want the US to leave, whereas the Kurds and the Sunni Arabs are opposed to this. The latter in particular would prefer to see the pro-Iranian militias leave Central Iraq, and have now become de facto allies of the US.

In the Sunni areas of Central Iraq, the situation has remained remarkably quiet. During the reporting period, there were no demonstrations against the government. Although these areas share the same problems of failed infrastructure and endemic corruption, the population is afraid to be identified through protests with the rebellion of Sunni extremists, especially ISIS.

In the disputed territories, the Kurds and Baghdad jostle for power. Following the loss of part of the disputed territories in the wake of the September 2017 referendum, some places have experienced a power vacuum: the central government has proved unable to provide the necessary security and protection against the remaining ISIS militants in rural areas. ISIS was happy to exploit this situation. Despite their opposition, the Kurds and Baghdad are now forced to re-establish security cooperation in order to efficiently fight the extremist militants in these zones.

The return of IDPs has been delayed. One and a half million displaced people have still not returned to their former homes. There are several reasons for this: war damage, security problems due to current conflicts or contamination with explosives, as well as dire economic prospects make many IDPs hesitant to return. The communities in the ISIS-occupied areas have been heavily scarred by events and are often torn along ethnic, religious and tribal lines. Although the government is putting pressure on communities to speed up returns, demands for punishment and retribution together with fears of a resurgence of Islamic State have deepened resistance to the return of families or clans associated with ISIS. In some areas there is little to no return of IDPs.

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