Iraq - Security Situation
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Country of Origin Information Report

May 2024
Acknowledgements

This report was jointly drafted by the EUAA COI Sector together with:

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

The following departments and organisations reviewed this report:

- Czech Republic, Department for Asylum and Migration Policy
- Greece, Greek Asylum Service (GAS), General Secretariat for Migration Policy
- Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Section for Information Analysis

The review carried out by the mentioned departments, experts or organisations contributes to the overall quality of the report, but it does not necessarily imply their formal endorsement of the final report, which is the full responsibility of EUAA.
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Disclaimer

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAH</td>
<td>Asa‘ib Ahl Al-Haq (The League of the Righteous). AAH was designated by the US as a terrorist organisation on 3 January 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACLED</td>
<td>Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asayish</td>
<td>Internal security and intelligence services of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badr Organisation</td>
<td>Iranian-backed Shia militia that is part of the PMF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHA</td>
<td>Confirmed Hazardous Areas (Term used by Landmine &amp; Cluster Munition Monitor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Central Statistical Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTS</td>
<td>Counter Terrorism Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DTM</td>
<td>IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERW</td>
<td>Explosive Remnants of War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP</td>
<td>Federal Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi</td>
<td>Arabic term for Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) or Popular Mobilization Units (PMU). Sometimes only referred to as Hashd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAN</td>
<td>Harakat Al-Nujab (Movement of the Party of God’s Noble Ones). HaN was designated by the US as a terrorist organisation on 5 March 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IED</td>
<td>Improvised Explosive Device</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRGC</td>
<td>Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRGC – QF</td>
<td>Quds Forces of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps of Iran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISF</td>
<td>Iraqi Security Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISIL</td>
<td>Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant; also known as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Islamic State (IS), or Daesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISW</td>
<td>Institute for the Study of War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOC</td>
<td>Joint Operations Command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDP</td>
<td>Kurdistan Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDPI</td>
<td>Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, also known as PDKI – Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, an Iranian Kurdish opposition group operating from Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KH</td>
<td>Kata’ib Hezbollah (Battalions of the Party of God); Iranian-backed Shia militia that is part of the Popular Mobilisation Units. KH was designated by the US as a terrorist organisation on 2 July 2009.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KRG</td>
<td>Kurdistan Regional Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KRI</td>
<td>Kurdistan Region of Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSS</td>
<td>Kata’ib Sayyid Al-Shuhada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoI</td>
<td>Ministry of Interior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOPA</td>
<td>Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukhtatar</td>
<td>Local community leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peshmerga</td>
<td>Military forces of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq Kurdistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PKK</td>
<td>Kurdistan Workers’ Party. The PKK is on the European Union’s list of designated groups which have been involved in terrorism, as well as being listed as a terrorist organisation by Türkiye, the United States, and Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMF</td>
<td>Popular Mobilization Forces or Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), also called <em>Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi</em> in Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUK</td>
<td>Patriotic Union of Kurdistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>USDOD</td>
<td>US Department of Defense</td>
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<tr>
<td>USDOS</td>
<td>US Department of State</td>
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<tr>
<td>UXO</td>
<td>Unexploded Ordnance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YBS</td>
<td>Sinjar Resistance Units</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Introduction

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

In order to support the assessment of the application of Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive on the existence of a serious and individual threat to a civilian’s life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict, the security situation report examines the type of armed conflicts taking place in the territory, the nature of the violence and presence of armed actors in different areas, and the impact on civilians, for example in terms of casualties/fatalities and conflict-linked displacement.


Methodology

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

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

Defining the terms of reference

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

Collecting information

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

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

Sources

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

Sources on security incidents

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

ACLED codes security incidents as follows:

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

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4 ACLED, Methodology, April 2019, [url](ACLED, Methodology, April 2019, [url](ACLED, FAQs: ACLED Sourcing Methodology, March 2023, [url](ACLED, FAQs: ACLED Sourcing Methodology, March 2023, [url](ACLED, Research & Local Data Collection Partners, nd., [url](ACLED, Research & Local Data Collection Partners, nd., [url]
- **Explosions/remote violence**: events where an explosion, bomb or other explosive device were used to engage in conflict. They include one-sided violent events in which the tool for engaging in conflict creates asymmetry by taking away the ability of the targets to engage or defend themselves and their location. They include air/drone strikes, suicide bombs, shelling/artillery/missile attacks, remote explosive/landmine/IEDs, grenades, chemical weapons.
- **Riots**: are a violent demonstration, often involving a spontaneous action by unorganised, unaffiliated members of society. They include violent demonstrations and mob violence.
- **Protests**: public demonstration in which the participants do not engage in violence, though violence may be used against them. They include peaceful protests, protests with intervention, excessive force against protesters.
- **Strategic developments**: information regarding the activities of violent groups that is not itself recorded as political violence, yet may trigger future events or contribute to political dynamics within and across states. It includes agreements, change to group/activity, non-violent transfer of territory, arrests.

For the purpose of this report only the following type of events were included in the analysis: battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians. Security incidents numbers and associated graphs/maps at country and governorate level are based on a publicly available ACLED dataset for Middle East. Additionally, ACLED codes actors involved in security incidents as follows: Actor1 is the ‘named actor involved in the event’ and Actor2 is the ‘named actor involved in the event’, while “[i]n most cases, an event requires two actors, noted in columns ‘ACTOR1’ and ‘ACTOR2’”6. However, event types ‘Explosions/Remote violence’, ‘Riots’, ‘Protests’, and ‘Strategic developments’ can include ‘one-sided events’.8 The ACLED coding of Actor1 and Actor2 does not necessarily indicate that one is the aggressor (e.g. Actor1) and the other one (e.g. Actor2) the target or victim.9 When focusing on the involvement of specific actors within certain regions, the drafters based their analysis on all those incidents, where ACLED coded the relevant actor either as ‘Actor1’ or as ‘Actor2’. This approach aims to illustrate the general level of involvement of the respective actors in the conflict without distinguishing between Actor1 and Actor2, as these categories, according to ACLED’s methodology, do not indicate any differentiation in terms of content/semantics.

Potential limits for COI use of ACLED data include:

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

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6 ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 2023, [url](#), pp. 10-20
7 ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (29 March 2024), [url](#)
8 ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 2023, [url](#), p. 22
9 ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 2023, [url](#), p. 4
Geographical precision of security incidents is variable: the provincial capital will represent the region if no further precisions are available and may be over-represented.

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

**Sources on civilian casualties**

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

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

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10 UNAMI, email to EASO, 11 November 2021
11 UNAMI, email to EASO, 11 November 2021
12 UCDP, About UCDP, n.d., [url](#)
13 UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#); UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, [url](#), p. 4
14 UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#)
15 UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, [url](#), p. 4
16 UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#)
17 UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, [url](#), pp. 5, 11, 24
18 UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#)
The stricter definition of an event of the UCDP excludes violent incidents that are recorded by ACLED. This definition includes ACLED’s option to assign violent events to ‘unidentified armed groups’. The difference in definitions is one explanatory factor of why the number of events recorded by ACLED can be significantly higher than the number recorded by the UCDP. In this report, the UCDP data has been used to contrast ACLED data and to provide figures on civilian deaths. To reflect the security dynamic in Iraq, where the actor behind many security incidents is unknown, EUAA not only includes events that meet all the UCDP’s set criteria (codified as ‘clear’ events in the UCDP dataset), but also include events codified as ‘unclear’ and ‘not applicable’.

Structure and use of the report

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

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

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

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

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19 ACLED, Comparing Conflict Data, Similarities and Differences Across Conflict Datasets, August 2019, url, pp. 5–7
Maps

Map 1. Iraq

Map 1: UN, Iraq - Map No. 3835 Rev.6, July 2014
1. General description of the security situation

1.1. Overview of recent security trends

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

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

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

Furthermore, the resurgence of the Israel-Hamas conflict following the October 2023 events led to a renewed rise in tensions between Iranian-backed Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF)
and US forces on Iraqi territory. According to the UNSG, attacks on supply convoys contracted by the US-led international coalition against ISIL resumed for the first time since August 2022 in the first quarter of 2023. The UNSG reported a total of 14 such attacks between 12 January 2023 and 25 January 2024.

**February to October 2023**

At the outset of the reference period, Iraq reportedly experienced a phase of relative calm and stability, the most stable since the years prior to the 2003 US-led invasion. Iraq expert Michael Knights stated in June 2023 that the country had reached a level of stability with a functioning government and a decline in the level of terrorist violence since 2003. However, as highlighted by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in March 2023, armed violence still continued in a ‘sporadic, fragmented and localised’ form in the country, which ‘remain[ed] fragile and deeply divided’. Peace and stability prospects were reportedly further hampered by weak security conditions, governance issues, climate and demographic pressures. As of April 2023, Iraq’s security situation was described as complex and challenging, characterised by foreign as well as domestic violent threats.

**Post-October 2023: US-Iran tensions**

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

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31 UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, url, para. 17
34 Dr Michael Knights is a Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and a specialist on military and security affairs in Iraq, Iran and the Gulf region. He has travelled extensively in Iraq and has gained wide experience in working with regional security and military organisations. TWI, Experts: Michael Knights, n.d., url
35 Knights, M., Iraq is Quietly Falling Apart, Foreign Affairs, 5 June 2023, url
36 SIPRI, Iraq in 2023: Challenges and prospects for peace and human security, 17 March 2023, url
37 Sabri, B., Iraqi Officials Eye a Path for Chinese-Iraqi Development, TWI, 28 September 2023, url
38 PMD and DPPA, The interlinkages between climate, peace and security in Iraq, April 2023, url, p. 3
39 Al-Sheikh Hussein, S., Iraq’s security sector: Twenty years of dashed hopes, Chatham House, 17 April 2023, url
41 Knights, M., Iraq Is Quietly Falling Apart, Foreign Affairs, 5 June 2023, url; Brookings, How Iraq is managing the Israel-Gaza crisis [Alshamary, M.], 21 December 2023, url
42 Brookings, How Iraq is managing the Israel-Gaza crisis [Alshamary, M.], 21 December 2023, url
43 UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, url, para. 22
tensions, with Iran-backed militias targeting US personnel and local political adversaries,\textsuperscript{44} and US forces responding with reprisals.\textsuperscript{45}

In October 2023, self-proclaimed armed groups known as ‘Islamic Resistance in Iraq’\textsuperscript{46} targeted facilities hosting US military personnel, as well as members of the international coalition against ISIL,\textsuperscript{47} mainly in Anbar and Erbil governorates.\textsuperscript{48} For more detailed information on the Islamic Resistance, please see section USA of this report. Further attacks were launched in November 2023 in Babil, Kirkuk, Wassit\textsuperscript{49} and Anbar governorates,\textsuperscript{50} as well as Baghdad.\textsuperscript{51} In December 2023 the US embassy in Baghdad was reportedly hit.\textsuperscript{52}

After retaliatory US airstrikes on 25 December 2023, the Iraqi government condemned the US strikes and reported that one Iraqi service member was killed and 18 other people were injured, including civilians.\textsuperscript{53} Airwars\textsuperscript{54} listed the 25 December airstrike as (for the reference period) one of two US airstrikes characterised as ‘incidents with civilian harm allegations’ with reportedly two female civilians injured. In February 2024, a US airstrike in Anbar governorate allegedly resulted in the death of three civilians, according to Airwars.\textsuperscript{55}

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

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

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

\textsuperscript{44} Goudsouzian, T., Iraq can't hold off Gaza's spillover much longer, The New Arab, 2 January 2024, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{45} Security Council Report, February 2024 Monthly Forecast, 31 January 2024, \url{url}; Brookings, How Iraq is managing the Israel-Gaza crisis [Alshamary, M.], 21 December 2023, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{46} The so-called Islamic Resistance emerged as an umbrella term in October 2023 in the context of the Israel-Hamas conflict, with the aim of demonstrating unity among Iran-affiliated armed groups; TWI, Profile: The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, last updated 30 October 2023, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{47} UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, \url{url}, para. 21-22
\textsuperscript{48} UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, \url{url}, para. 22
\textsuperscript{49} UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, \url{url}, para. 25, 27, 30
\textsuperscript{50} TWI, Leaving Iraq May Be Washington’s Wisest Choice, 26 February 2024, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{51} TWI, Leaving Iraq May Be Washington’s Wisest Choice, 26 February 2024, \url{url}; Security Council Report, February 2024 Monthly Forecast, 31 January 2024, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{52} UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, \url{url}, para. 28
\textsuperscript{53} UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, \url{url}, para. 30-31
\textsuperscript{54} ‘Airwars is a not-for-profit transparency watchdog which tracks, assesses, archives and investigates civilian harm claims in conflict-affected nations.’ Airwars, Who we are, n.d., \url{url}
\textsuperscript{55} Airwars, US-led coalition in Iraq & Syria [filter: US forces, US-led coalition; incidents with civilian harm allegations], as of 11 March 2024, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{56} Security Council Report, February 2024 Monthly Forecast, 31 January 2024, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{57} Security Council Report, February 2024 Monthly Forecast, 31 January 2024, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{58} Brookings, How Iraq is managing the Israel-Gaza crisis [Alshamary, M.], 21 December 2023, \url{url}
in Iraq prior to February 2023, please refer to section 1.1.1 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

Conflict with ISIL

Throughout the reporting period, the UNSG cited ISIL strongholds in the outskirts of Baghdad (Tarmiyah)\(^{59}\) and Salah-Al-Din, Diyala, Kirkuk and Nineawa\(^{60}\) governorates. ISIL operations were reportedly mainly limited to rural areas, with attacks in urban areas becoming less prevalent.\(^{62}\) Attacks primarily targeted ‘government and security officials, community leaders, civilians and military facilities’.\(^{63}\)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

\(^{68}\) UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, [url], para. 32
the UNSG noted that ISIL’s operations remained ‘largely constrained’ due to the effective targeting of its members and the disruption of their sleeper cells and networks. Nonetheless, ISIL managed to carry out ‘periodic attacks’.69

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

**Tensions within the Iraqi security apparatus/within the PMF**

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

69 UNSG, Eighteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2024/117, 31 January 2024, [url], para. 34
70 Hadad, H., From shock and awe to stability and flaws: Iraq’s post-invasion journey, ECFR, 25 May 2023, [url], p. 14
71 Hamzeh Hadad is a Baghdad-based political analyst and researcher focusing on democratisation and federalism in Iraq. ECFR, Experts & Staff: Hamzeh Hadad, n.d., [url]
73 SIPRI, Iraq in 2023: Challenges and prospects for peace and human security, 17 March 2023, [url]
75 TWI, Infighting Between Northern Hashd Units Requires IRGC-QF Mediation, 6 July 2023, [url]
76 Al-Kaabi, A. and Knights, M., Kataib Hezbollah’s Escalating Feud with the Iraqi Security Forces, TWI, 19 May 2023, [url]
77 Al-Kaabi, A. and Knights, M., Kataib Hezbollah’s Escalating Feud with the Iraqi Security Forces, TWI, 19 May 2023, [url]
1.2. Political developments

National political developments

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

The political situation in the Kurdistan Region

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

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

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78 UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, url, para. 2
79 Al Jazeera, Iraqi parliament passes controversial vote law amendments, 27 March 2023, url
80 Reuters, Iraq’s Shi’ite ruling alliance wins more than 100 local council seats, 20 December 2023, url
81 Global Security, Coordination Framework, 16 January 2024, url
82 Rudaw, Sadr calls on supporters not to disturb local elections, 13 December 2023, url
83 VOA, Iraqi Court’s Decision Threatens to Undermine Kurdish Autonomy, 22 February 2024, url
84 Al Jazeera, PUK returns to Kurdish Regional Government meetings after boycott, 14 May 2023, url; Aydoğan, B., Iraqi Kurds Face Legitimacy Issues Amid Election Deadlock and Internal Division, TWI, 7 August 2023, url
85 Aydoğan, B., Iraqi Kurds Face Legitimacy Issues Amid Election Deadlock and Internal Division, TWI, 7 August 2023, url
86 Reuters, Iraqi Kurdistan 2022 parliament extension unconstitutional, supreme court rules, 30 May 2023, url; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, url, para. 6; Aydoğan, B., Iraqi Kurds Face Legitimacy Issues Amid Election Deadlock and Internal Division, TWI, 7 August 2023, url
87 Rudaw, Kurdish parliament’s fifth term officially dissolves after Iraqi top court ruling, 2 July 2023, url
88 New Arab (The), Iraqi Kurdistan’s parliamentary elections will not be held in February, Kurdish officials say, 8 January 2024, url
89 Aydoğan, B., Iraqi Kurds Face Legitimacy Issues Amid Election Deadlock and Internal Division, TWI, 7 August 2023, url; Rudaw, IHEC initiates preparations for Kurdistan Region elections: Spox, 28 February 2024, url
90 New Arab (the), Iraqi Kurdistan region reschedules oft-delayed parliamentary elections for June, 5 March 2024, url
91 Rudaw, IHEC initiates preparations for Kurdistan Region elections: Spox, 28 February 2024, url; New Arab (The), President of Iraq’s Kurdistan region to delay parliamentary elections, 1 May 2024, url
Relations between Baghdad and Erbil

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

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

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92 Rudaw, Kurdish identity of disputed areas at risk: Kurdish official, 10 November 2023, url
93 New Arab (The), What is driving ethnic tensions in Iraq's Kirkuk?, 13 September 2023, url; Madwar, S., A war over the city: Exploring Kirkuk’s multi-layered conflict, Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, 10 September 2023, url
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95 Al Jazeera, Iraq's gov't signs deal with KRG to resume oil exports, 4 April 2023, url
96 Reuters, Iraqi PM says foreign oil companies in Kurdistan to resume production within a month if agreement reached over contracts, 24 October 2023, url; New Arab (The), Iraq, Kurdish authorities yet to agree oil exports to Turkey, 28 November 2023, url
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99 Rudaw, KRG says Iraq paid less than half its 2023 budget share, 16 March 2024, url; Rudaw, Salaries must be fairly distributed among Iraqi provinces, says former PM, 14 January 2024, url
100 Rudaw, Patients, students, civil servants lose in Erbil, Baghdad money row, 16 September 2023, url
101 Arab News, Iraqi Kurds protest unpaid salaries from Baghdad, 5 September 2023, url; Rudaw, Thousands of teachers protest in Sulaimani over unpaid salaries, 22 October 2023, url; Rudaw, Striking teachers plan protest despite government promises, 7 January 2024, url
1.3. International involvement

Türkiye

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

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

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

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102 VOA, Turkey Launches Airstrikes Against Kurdish Militants in Iraq, Syria, 13 January 2024, url: Al Jazeera, Six Turkish soldiers killed in anti-PKK military operation in Iraq, 10 August 2023, url
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105 VOA, Turkey Launches Airstrikes Against Kurdish Militants in Iraq, Syria, 13 January 2024, url
106 Aziz, S. et al., Turkish interventions in its near abroad: The case of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Clingendael Netherlands Institute of International Relations, March 2022, p. 3
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109 ANF, Turkish state establishes a new base in Duhok, 21 January 2024, url
110 Asharq Al-Awsat: Iraq Reveals Presence of Five Turkish Military Bases on its Soil, 26 July 2022, url
112 CFR, Conflict Between Turkey and Armed Kurdish Groups, last updated 8 August 2023, url
113 HRW, World Report 2024 – Iraq, 11 January 2024, url
114 International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., url: Rudaw, Three YBS members killed in Turkish drone strike in Shingal: Kurdistan CT, 23 May 2023, url; Reuters, Three killed in Turkish drone strike against YBS fighters in Iraq, 27 February 2023, url
115 Coded by ACLED as Actor 1.
governorate, among them an attack near Sulaymaniyah airport. Turkish intelligence further claimed to have carried out operations in northern Iraq specifically targeting PKK operatives. 

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

For information on the impact of Turkish operations on civilians, please see section Security incidents.

Iran

Iran has significantly influenced Iraqi politics and has supported affiliated paramilitary groups in the country. Its main objectives are to prevent an Iraqi government hostile toward Iran and to expel the US military presence from Iraq and the wider region. Through its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) – Quds Force, Iran has provided financial and material support, such as weapons, to groups like Kata’ib Hezbollah, Asa’ib Ahl Al-Haq and Harakat Al-Nujaba. These groups, along with other smaller militias, form the core of self-styled Islamic Resistance in Iraq whose focus is to expel the US presence from Iraq and establish control of the state. The IRGC has further become involved in most of the country’s major economic sectors by undertaking infrastructure projects and has been engaging in smuggling activities. The strong links between IRGC and PMF have become visible through activities such as a joint military parade carried out in Basra and a joint maritime exercise of Iranian Basij Naval forces and PMF in the Shatt Al-Arab waters in January 2024. The

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116 EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Iraq, data covering 1 February 2023 to 26 January 2024, as of 26 January 2024, url
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128 Kittleson, S., As slain leaders commemorated, Iraq and Iran attacked yet again, Al-Majalla, last updated 8 January 2024, url
129 Alsharq Al-Awsat, Basij, Iraqi PMF Stage Joint Display in Shatt al-Arab, 3 January 2024, url
Washington Institute for Near East Policy (TWI) reported that in May 2023, a senior member of the IRGC was called upon to mediate following clashes between two PMF units in Kirkuk.\(^{130}\)

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

Iran has consistently accused the KRI of providing refuge to Iranian Kurdish opposition groups and has in the past launched strikes on their camps.\(^{135}\) It has further blamed these groups for fomenting unrest in Iranian Kurdistan following the protests triggered by the death of the young Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini in September 2022.\(^{136}\) In March 2023, the Iranian and Iraqi governments signed a border security agreement. It aims at cooperation to protect the common border, and saw Iraq pledging to prevent armed groups in the KRI from launching cross-border attacks against Iran.\(^{137}\) Part of the agreement was to disarm Iranian Kurdish opposition groups and move their camps further away from the border region.\(^{138}\) The Iranian military set a deadline for September 2023 for the implementation, threatening to resume cross-border strikes if the agreement was not met.\(^{139}\) The Iraqi Foreign Minister claimed in September that the relocation of Iranian Kurdish groups away from the border into camps deeper inside the KRI was underway.\(^{140}\) Certain groups such as the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) and Komala parties reportedly left camps in Erbil governorate, while the PKK-affiliated Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) refused to be disarmed.\(^{141}\)

**USA**

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

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\(^{130}\) TWI, Infighting Between Northern Hashd Units Requires IRGC-QF Mediation, 6 July 2023, [url]

\(^{131}\) CFRI, Iranian Strikes in Iraqi Kurdistan: A Calculated Provocation from Tehran, 17 January 2024, [url]

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

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

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

\(^{135}\) Reuters, Iraq starts relocating Iranian Kurdish fighters from Iran border, 12 September 2023, [url]; CFRI, How Much Influence Does Iran Have in Iraq?, 18 October 2022, [url]

\(^{136}\) Van Wilgenburg, W., Iran’s Pressure Campaign on Iranian Kurds Continues, TWI, 13 September 2023, [url]

\(^{137}\) Al Jazeera, Iraq and Iran sign deal to tighten border security, 19 March 2023, [url]

\(^{138}\) Aziz, S., The Many Shades of Iran-Iraq Security Agreement, EPC, 11 August 2023, [url]

\(^{139}\) Rudaw, Iran threatens attacks on Kurdish groups if Iraq fails to secure border, 11 July 2023, [url]

\(^{140}\) Reuters, Iraq starts relocating Iranian Kurdish fighters from Iran border, 12 September 2023, [url]


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

\(^{143}\) Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, [url], p. 7

\(^{144}\) AA, 2nd drone targeting US-led coalition base near Iraq’s Erbil airport shot down in last 24 hours, 12 January 2024, [url]
stayed in a training and advisory capacity\textsuperscript{145} to assist the ISF, the CTS as well as Kurdish Security Forces.\textsuperscript{146}

Beginning in October 2023 following the start of the Israel-Hamas conflict on 7 October, bases housing US troops were repeatedly targeted by rocket\textsuperscript{147} and drone attacks.\textsuperscript{148} According to US reports, most of the drones and rockets were intercepted,\textsuperscript{149} with the attacks being attributed to the so-called Islamic Resistance group, which consists of Shiite militias closely linked with Iran.\textsuperscript{150} The Islamic Resistance emerged as an umbrella term in October 2023 in the context of the Israel-Hamas conflict to demonstrate unity among Iran-backed armed groups behind attacks against US interests.\textsuperscript{151} US intelligence identified the Islamic Resistance to be a front group for Iran-allied militias, among them Kata’ib Hezbollah, Harakat Al-Nujaba, Harakat Ansar Allah Al-Awliya and Kata’ib Sayyid Al-Shuhada.\textsuperscript{152} The US military responded with airstrikes that targeted leading members of the Shiite militias suspected to be behind these attacks\textsuperscript{153} as well as their facilities.\textsuperscript{154} Some US retaliatory strikes caused casualties among PMF units\textsuperscript{155} leading to tensions between the Iraqi and US governments.\textsuperscript{156} Both governments were reportedly set to start talks on a possible withdrawal of US troops from Iraq.\textsuperscript{157} However, several factors such as the US presidential election set for November 2024\textsuperscript{158} and Israel-Iran tensions reportedly delayed a decision regarding the withdrawal.\textsuperscript{159} From February 2024 onwards, a halt to the attacks on US targets carried out by the Islamic Resistance was noted, reportedly due to the desire by Iran not to escalate the situation further at that time.\textsuperscript{160}

\textsuperscript{145} Amwaj.media, Deep Dive: Why a US withdrawal from Iraq is off the table, 30 January 2024, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{146} USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, July 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023, 9 November 2023, \url{url}, p. 15
\textsuperscript{147} EPIC, ISHM: November 16 – 30, 2023, 30 November 2023, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{148} Reuters, Armed drone shot down near US base in northern Iraq – sources, 18 January 2024, \url{url}; AA, 2nd drone targeting US-led coalition base near Iraq’s Erbil airport shot down in last 24 hours, 12 January 2024, \url{url}; Reuters, Drone attack targets Iraq’s Harir base, sirens sound at US embassy, 9 November 2023, \url{url}; Reuters, Rockets, drones hit Iraqi bases housing U.S. forces, 20 October 2023, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{149} Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, \url{url}, p. 7; New Arab (The), Iraq: Explosive drone shot down at Erbil airbase hosting US forces, 2 January 2024, \url{url}; basnews, Drone Attack Intercepted Over Skies of US Military Base in Erbil, 3 November 2023, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{150} Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, \url{url}, p. 7
\textsuperscript{151} TWI, Profile: The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, last updated 30 October 2023, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{152} USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, \url{url}, p. 12
\textsuperscript{153} NPR, U.S. drone strike kills a leader of an Iran-backed militia in Iraq, 7 February 2024, \url{url}; EPIC, ISHM: December 28, 2023 – January 4, 2024, 4 January 2024, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{154} Reuters, U.S. forces carry out series of strikes against Iran-backed militia in Iraq, 22 November 2023, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{155} Alsharq Al-Awsat, PMF Chief Demands Withdrawal of US-Led Coalition from Iraq, 4 February 2024, \url{url}; Al-Sumaria, هيئة الحشد تعلن وقوع 12 ضحية ب"اعتداءات" أمريكية [PMU Commission declares 12 casualties in US attacks], 22 November 2023, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{156} Alsharq Al-Awsat, PMF Chief Demands Withdrawal of US-Led Coalition from Iraq, 4 February 2024, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{157} Arab Weekly (The), US to negotiate with Iraq end of military coalition presence in Iraq, 25 January 2024, \url{url}; Alsharq Al-Awsat, PMF Chief Demands Withdrawal of US-Led Coalition from Iraq, 4 February 2024, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{158} Reuters, Talks to end US-led coalition in Iraq may take until after US election, Iraqi official says, 12 March 2024, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{159} Alsharq Al-Awsat, Iran-Israeli Tension Delays Decision on US Troop Withdrawal from Iraq, 17 April 2024, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{160} TWI, Explaining Apparent Muqawama De-Escalation Since January 28, 7 February 2024, \url{url}; New Arab (The), Iran-backed militias in Iraq halt attacks on US targets amid claims of defending Gaza, 21 February 2024, \url{url}
1.4. Armed Actors

Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL)

There are widely diverging estimations regarding the number of ISIL fighters in Iraq and Syria, ranging from UN figures of 3,000 to 5,000 fighters\(^{161}\) to US estimations of 8,000 to 16,000 fighters\(^{162}\) with frequent movement taking place across the porous border between the two countries.\(^{163}\) An Iraqi General in March 2023 gave a lower number of 500 active ISIL fighters in Iraq, arguing that the group has ‘lost its ability to attract new recruits’.\(^{164}\) In July 2023, Mohammed Hassan, a non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute, analysed that ISIL has failed to make a comeback in Iraq due to the deployment and capacities of the Iraqi army, security services, and supporting militias, the reduced popularity of the Islamist movement, less support from the local population, the failure to recruit members as well as the loss of financial resources.\(^{165}\) According to a June 2023 statement from the spokesman for the commander of the armed forces, 99% of ISIL’s capacity had been eliminated and the group consisted of small cells of two to six members hiding in desert areas, valleys or mountain ranges.\(^{166}\)

The US Department of Defense (USDOD) reported in its quarterly reports on the status of the US military Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq and Syria that ISIL was operating in a survival mode\(^{167}\) and was unable to launch larger complex attacks.\(^{168}\) According to the reports, ISIL was maintaining a ‘low-grade insurgency in rural areas’,\(^{169}\) with most of its attacks occurring in Diyala, Kirkuk and Salah Al-Din governorates.\(^{170}\) According to the UN Secretary-General, asymmetric attacks carried out by ISIL were recorded in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din governorates, mostly targeting the ISF.\(^{171}\) Throughout the reference

\(^{161}\) UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url], para. 45
\(^{162}\) USDOS, Country Report on Terrorism 2022 – Chapter 5, 30 November 2023, [url], p. 279
\(^{163}\) CFRI, Daesh: Which outlook for Iraq in 2023?, 13 March 2023, [url]
\(^{164}\) AFP, Up to 500 IS fighters still active in Iraq: military, 12 March 2023
\(^{165}\) Hassan, M., Why ISIS Cannot Bring the Caliphate Back to Life, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 18 July 2023, [url]
\(^{166}\) Al-Arabiya, الجيش العراقي: فصينًا على 99% من عناصر داعش بالبلاد [Iraqi army: we have vanquished 99% of ISIL members in the country], 23 June 2023, [url]
\(^{168}\) USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url], p. 16; USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, July 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023, 9 November 2023, [url], p. 12
\(^{169}\) USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, July 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023, 9 November 2023, [url], p. 12
period, the International Crisis Group reported clashes between ISIL and ISF, resulting in deaths on both sides. Additionally, there were sporadic attacks on PMF positions.\textsuperscript{172}

The UN Secretary-General further noted an overall decline in the number of attacks in the first half of 2023 (178 attacks) compared to the first half of 2022 (526 attacks).\textsuperscript{173} The trend continued throughout 2023, with 92 attacks in the first quarter \textsuperscript{174} and 54 attacks in the last quarter.\textsuperscript{175} ACLED recorded 44 incidents of violence employed by ISIL affecting civilians (explosions/remotely triggered violence and violence against civilians)\textsuperscript{176} with overall 42 fatalities within the reference period.\textsuperscript{177} Sources reported among ISIL-related incidents killings\textsuperscript{178} and kidnappings of civilians.\textsuperscript{179}

**Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)**

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

During the reference period, the ISF conducted anti-ISIL operations in Kirkuk, Diyala, Anbar, Salah Al-Din governorates and near Baghdad by carrying out airstrikes and engaging in clashes resulting in the killing of suspected ISIL militants.\textsuperscript{184} In June 2023, the spokesman for the commander of the armed forces announced that the security situation in areas liberated from ISIL was very good and would allow handing over the responsibility for the security sector in the city centres to the Ministry of Interior. The plan for the armed forces would therefore be to withdraw from the cities and deploy outside them, carrying out tasks such as...
securing the borders and filling any security vacuums existing in rural areas or the desert region of Anbar governorate.\textsuperscript{185}

**Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF)**

The PMF (also known as the Popular Mobilisation Units, PMU or Al-Hashd Al-Sha’bi) are ‘an umbrella of more than 60 armed factions that operate separately from the ISF and are nominally under the command of the Iraqi prime minister’.\textsuperscript{186} They were originally formed in 2014 to combat ISIL following the group’s takeover of the northern city of Mosul.\textsuperscript{187} In April 2023, the finance committee of the Iraqi parliament published a report stating that the number of PMF personnel in the 2023 budget had increased by 95%, from 122,000 to 238,000.\textsuperscript{188} PMF Chairman Falih Al-Fayyadh later gave a lower figure of 204,000 troops covered in the budget allocated to the PMF.\textsuperscript{189} According to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (TWI), the number of registered PMF troops has long been deliberately obscured and the actual troop numbers have always exceeded the number of those registered.\textsuperscript{190}

The PMF are heterogeneous in nature\textsuperscript{191} and there are internal rivalries within PMF ranks.\textsuperscript{192} The PMF are characterised by three factions, the first and the most powerful one is allied with Iran,\textsuperscript{193} featuring groups such as the Badr Corps, Asa’ib Ahl Al-Haq, and Kata’ib Hezbollah.\textsuperscript{194} The second follows the Shiite religious authority in Najaf, headed by Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani and the third is loyal to the political and religious leader Muqtada Al-Sadr.\textsuperscript{195} Most of the PMF members are Shia Arabs\textsuperscript{196}, however there are smaller militias made up of Sunni Arabs or

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{185} Al-Arabiya,  الجيش العراقي: ف قضينا على 99% من عناصر داعش بالبلاد [Iraqi army: we have vanquished 99% of ISIL members in the country], 23 June 2023, url
\bibitem{186} USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, url, p. 20
\bibitem{187} Alaaldin, R., The Popular Mobilization Force is turning Iraq into an Iranian client state [Commentary], Brookings, 2 February 2024, url
\bibitem{188} Al-Kaabi, A. and Knights, M., Extraordinary Popular Mobilization Force Expansion, by the Numbers, TWI, 3 June 2023, url; CFRI, In Iraq, the Hashd calls the shots, 3 November 2023, url
\bibitem{189} Amwaj.media, Granted expanded funding and personnel, Iraq’s PMU highlights drone arsenal, 20 June 2023, url; Al-Kaabi, A. and Knights, M., Extraordinary Popular Mobilization Force Expansion, by the Numbers, TWI, 3 June 2023, url
\bibitem{190} Al-Kaabi, A. and Knights, M., Extraordinary Popular Mobilization Force Expansion, by the Numbers, TWI, 3 June 2023, url
\bibitem{191} CFRI, In Iraq, the Hashd calls the shots, 3 November 2023, url; Ezzedine, N. and van Veen, E., Power in perspective: Four key insights into Iraq’s Al-Hashd al-Sha’abi, Clingendael Netherlands Institute of International Relations, June 2018, url, p. 1
\bibitem{192} Al-Kaabi, A. and Knights, M., Hadi al-Ameri’s Bad(r) Month, TWI, 21 February 2024, url; Al-Kaabi, A. and Knights, M., Badr and Asaib Crack the Whip on Kataib al-Imam Ali in Basra, TWI, 11 January 2024, url
\bibitem{193} CFRI, In Iraq, the Hashd calls the shots, 3 November 2023, url
\bibitem{194} Egel, D. et al., The Future of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces - Lessons from Historical Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Efforts, RAND Corporation, 2023, url, p. 4
\bibitem{195} CFRI, In Iraq, the Hashd calls the shots, 3 November 2023, url
\bibitem{196} USDOS, 2022 Country Reports on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, url, p. 1
\end{thebibliography}
smaller minority groups, such as Yazidi, Christian, Shabak, and Turkmen units. These smaller groups are allied with the main factions, often with the pro-Iranian groups because of their influence and power. They are generally active within or near the regions they live in.

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

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

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197 Egel, D. et al., The Future of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces - Lessons from Historical Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Efforts, RAND Corporation, 2023, p. 4; CFRI, In Iraq, the Hashd calls the shots, 3 November 2023.
199 TWI, Profile: Kataib Babilyoun (50th PMF Brigade), last updated 27 November 2023.
200 ISW and CTP, Iran Update, December 1, 2023, 1 December 2023.
201 Kurdistan24, Turkmen Brigades prevent several Kurdish families from reclaiming Kirkuk homes, 3 December 2023.
202 CFRI, In Iraq, the Hashd calls the shots, 3 November 2023.
205 Amwaj.media, Granted expanded funding and personnel, Iraq’s PMU highlights drone arsenal, 20 June 2023.
208 TWI, Profile: Kataib Hezbollah, last updated 21 October 2023.
210 Egel, D. et al., The Future of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces - Lessons from Historical Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Efforts, RAND Corporation, 2023, p. 4; for an example of such a PMU unit, see TWI, Profile: Ansar Allah al-Awfiya (19th PMF Brigade), last updated 29 November 2023.
211 ISW and CTP, The Leadership and Purpose of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces, 19 March 2024.
212 Iraqi News, Two PMF fighters killed in an attack carried out by ISIS, 7 January 2024.
213 Alaladin, R., The Popular Mobilization Force is turning Iraq into an Iranian client state [Commentary], Brookings, 2 February 2024.
seat in parliament and determine policy.\textsuperscript{214} While the state budget allocates salaries to the PMF for their role as security agents, PMF members have sought to increase their gains by engaging in extralegal and illegal activities, such as creating military enterprises, seizing properties, imposing arbitrary taxes at checkpoints, smuggling goods such as oil, trading in scrap metal, kidnapping and extortion.\textsuperscript{215} Since the end of major fighting operations against ISIL, the PMF have dominated the security sector in the liberated governorates Ninewa, Anbar and Salah Al-Din, where they have also sought to profit economically by becoming a partner in reconstruction efforts, imposing fees and levying taxes on businesses and transportation of goods, especially across borders.\textsuperscript{216} Iranian-backed PMF were reportedly present at and around the country’s major border crossings.\textsuperscript{217} Sources have pointed out an increasing organisational resemblance to the IRGC,\textsuperscript{218} for example through the establishment of the PMF’s own government approved construction company mirroring the Khatam Al-Anbiya company of the IRGC.\textsuperscript{219}

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

**Peshmerga**

The Peshmerga are the regional armed forces of the KRI, which have historically been divided into forces under the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and forces under the Patriotic Union of...
Kurdistan (PUK). \(^{225}\) Approximately 54,000 Peshmerga form units commanded by the KRG Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs (MoPA), while the larger force, about 100,000 troops, ‘serve in units directly controlled by either’ KDP or PUK. \(^{226}\) The US has been subsidising payments of Peshmerga serving under the MoPA and has pushed to move the partisan units under a joint MoPA command. However, there has not been much progress due to the continued political divide between the two parties. \(^{227}\)

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

**Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK)**

Since the 1990s, the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) has been carrying out armed actions against the Turkish army from the Iraq-Iran border area while its top commanders are based in the KRI. \(^{236}\) Using northern Iraq as a base, it carried out attacks in Türkiye and has been designated a terrorist organisation by the EU and the US. \(^{237}\) As of January 2022, the PKK had a presence in the north of Dohuk and Erbil governorates along the border with Türkiye, in the Qandil mountains along the border between the KRI and Iran, in the Asos mountains in Sulaymaniya governorate, in Makhmur district and the Sinjar mountain range in Nineawa.
In Sinjar district, the group has security and political influence through local Yazidi militias like the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS), which Türkiye considers to be a PKK branch.

In June 2023, the PKK declared an end to a ceasefire which it had unilaterally implemented with Türkiye after the earthquake in February 2023. The group blamed the end of the ceasefire on the killing of a member of an associated militant group in Sulaymaniya which local Kurdish activists claimed had been carried out by Turkish intelligence services. From August 2023 onwards, attacks carried out by the PKK on Turkish military positions or clashes between PKK and Turkish troops were recorded on almost a monthly basis in Northern Iraq.

In one such attack, PKK fighters attacked positions of the Turkish army in Northern Iraq and killed at least 12 Turkish soldiers, reportedly constituting one of the largest attacks of the last decade.

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

1.5. Impact of the security situation on civilian population

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

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238 Aziz, S. et al., Turkish interventions in its near abroad: The case of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq [Map], Clingendael Netherlands Institute of International Relations, March 2022, url, p. 7
240 Rudaw, Iraq bans PKK, labeling it a threat to the country, 15 March 2024, url
241 Al-Monitor, Did Kurdish PKK call off truce with Turkey to make peace or war?, 14 June 2023, url
242 New Arab (The), PKK ends its unilateral ceasefire with Turkey, threatens wide attacks, 15 June 2023, url
244 taz, Vergeltung gegen die PKK [Retaliation against the PKK], 26 December 2023, url
245 Arab Weekly (The), Iraq bans PKK after high-level security talks with Turkey, 15 March 2024, url
246 Rudaw, Iraq bans PKK, labeling it a threat to the country, 15 March 2024, url
According to ACLED’s conflict exposure measure,\textsuperscript{247} between 1 February 2023 and 22 March 2024, 16 692 615\textsuperscript{248} individuals were exposed to conflict due to their proximity to security-related incidents coded as battles, explosions/remote violence or violence against civilians in Iraq.\textsuperscript{249} ACLED specifies that ‘people are harmed by this exposure in different ways: they may be directly injured; they may find themselves in active conflict; they and their group may be targeted; or they may be affected by the destruction of their village, neighborhood, or town.’\textsuperscript{250}

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

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

\textsuperscript{247} ACLED’s Conflict Exposure Calculator combines information on conflict events from the ACLED database with estimates of population size to estimate the impact on civilians based on factors such as the proximity to an event, the event type, the type of violent actor involved, the geographical location, and the timing of the event. ACLED, Conflict Exposure, n.d., url

\textsuperscript{248} This figure indicates ACLED’s so-called ‘best’ estimate, which means that the respective proximity to each security-related incident was selected based on the type and intensity of the incident. For more detailed information on the ‘best’ estimate, see ACLED, Conflict Exposure, n.d., url

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

\textsuperscript{250} ACLED, Conflict Exposure, n.d., url

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

\textsuperscript{252} Belgium, CEDOCA, Irak: De veiligheidssituatie in de Koerdische Autonome Regio [Iraq: The security situation in the Kurdish Autonomous Region], 28 September 2023, url, p. 19
areas, while Türkiye denied targeting civilians stating that it was trying to avoid civilian casualties by coordinating with the Iraqi authorities.

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

Security incidents

Number and type of security incidents

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

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253 France, OFPRA, Irak : Veille sécuritaire du 1er juillet 2022 au 30 juin 2023 [Iraq: Security monitoring, 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023], 20 September 2023, url, p. 23
254 Asharq Al-Awsat, Iraq Rejects Turkish Strikes in Kurdistan Region, Seeks Resolution, 2 October 2023, url
255 VOA, Thousands Still Missing from 20 Years of Iraq’s Turmoil, 9 April 2023, url
256 ICRC, Iraq: For families of the missing, the pain remains even as the search for answers continues, 30 August 2023, url
257 ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), url
258 ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), url
259 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), url
Explosions/remote violence, which includes explosive devices, artillery fire and air strikes, is the category with the highest number of individual incidents by far with 4,410 incidents recorded by ACLED between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. The largest number of explosions/remote violence was registered in Dohuk (2,816), followed by Erbil (961) and Ninewa (210) governorates. The lowest number of explosions/remote violence were documented in Karbala (1), Wassit (3) and Babil (9) governorates.

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

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260 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), url
261 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), url
262 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), url
The third largest category of incidents is violence against civilians with 447 incidents recorded by ACLED between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Most incidents during the year were recorded in Baghdad (130), Missan (70) and Thi-Qar (47) governorates. The lowest number of incidents were recorded in Dohuk (3) and Qadissiya (3) governorates.\footnote{EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), \url{url}}

By contrast, for the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 282 security events leading to fatalities\footnote{UCDP records only incidents where armed force was used by an organised actor against another organized actor, or against civilians, resulting in at least 1 direct death at a specific location and a specific date. UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, \url{url}, p. 4} in Iraq (see Figure 3). The largest number of events were recorded in Dohuk governorate (76) followed by Erbil (25) and Sulaymaniyah (22) governorates. For 75 of the events recorded by the UCDP, the exact location within a governorate was not specified. Most of these events (70 out of 75) were reported in the Qandil Mountains and Northern Kurdistan areas of Iraq. During the indicated reference period, the UCDP did not record any events resulting in fatalities in the governorates of Basrah, Missan, Muthanna, Najaf, Wassit, Qadissiya and Karbala.\footnote{EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024}
Figure 3. Events leading to fatalities recorded by the UCDP between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by governorate.267

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

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

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267 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
268 Musings on Iraq is a blog by Joel Wind, that specialises on the ‘politics, economics, security, culture and history of Iraq’. Blogger, Joel Wing, n.d., url
269 Musings on Iraq, Violence Almost Disappears In Iraq In March 2024, 4 March 2024, url
270 Airwars, Who we are, n.d., url
271 Airwars, Turkish military in Iraq & Syria, as of 11 March 2024, url
272 Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen ambtsbericht Irak [Country report Iraq], November 2023, url, p. 18
273 Al Jazeera, Turkish air strikes target northern Iraq and Syria, 16 January 2024, url; AP, Turkey steps up airstrikes against Kurdish groups in Syria and Iraq after 12 soldiers were killed, 25 December 2023, url; Reuters, As Turkey intensifies war on Kurdish militants in Iraq, civilians are suffering, 10 October 2023, url
reportedly resulted in civilian casualties. In October 2023, it was reported that the frequency of Turkish airstrikes had increased in recent years and extended further into Iraqi territory. Türkiye’s military operations in the Kurdish region have reportedly been criticised for often leaving civilian lives and property stuck in the crossfire.

Type of weapons and tactics used

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

The surge in Iranian-backed groups’ attacks on US target in Iraq has seen a tactical shift, often involving drones and missiles, targeting the same locations in a single day. Drones have reportedly been the primary tool in these recent attacks, with their use more than doubling in 2023 compared to 2021 and 2022 combined. Meanwhile, the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) has fallen dramatically, with only one reported IED attack against US targets in 2023.

In retaliatory US attacks on Iran-linked targets in early February 2024, which affected both civilian and security areas, 16 people, including civilians, were killed and 25 wounded, according to the Iraqi government.

Civilian casualties

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

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

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

276 Rudaw, Turkey to ‘secure’ Iraq border in the summer, says Erdogan, 4 March 2023, [url];


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

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

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

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

282 Al Jazeera, Iraq says 16 people, including civilians, killed in ‘new US aggression’, 3 February 2024, [url];

283 UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
In 2023, Iraq Body Count (IBC), an independent data project that documents violent civilian deaths caused by US-led coalition forces, Iraqi government forces or paramilitary or criminal attacks by others in Iraq, documented at least 537 civilian deaths due to violence, 27% less than in 2022 and 20% less than in 2021. For the first three months of 2024, the same source documented 119 civilian deaths.

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284 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
285 IBC, About the Iraq Body Count project, n.d., url
286 IBC, Documented civilian deaths from violence, accessed 2 April 2024
For the reference period of this report (1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024), UNAMI documented a total of 95 incidents resulting in at least 188 civilian casualties, including 78 dead and 110 wounded (see Figure 6).

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

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287 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
The majority of civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI were caused by unexploded ordnances (UXOs), explosive remnants of war (ERWs), air attacks, mortars and rockets, and small arms fire (see Figure 8).

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

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288 "M" for Male and "F" for Female.
289 Iraqi police due to their civilian functions related to law enforcement at the time of the incident are considered as civilians (not directly taking part in hostilities – DPHI).
290 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
291 UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
292 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
deaths). No civilian casualties were recorded in the governorates of Baghdad, Babil, and Karbala.293

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

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

293 UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
294 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
295 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
Iraq Body Count (IBC) reported a maximum of 571 civilians killed for the period between February 2023 and February 2024. During this period, the highest monthly death toll was reported for April 2023 with 86 civilians killed, followed by March 2023 with 76.

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

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

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

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296 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
297 IBC, Documented civilian deaths from violence, as of 18 March 2024, url
298 Musings on Iraq, Violence Almost Disappears In Iraq In March 2024, 4 March 2024, url
299 Airwars, Turkish military in Iraq & Syria, as of 11 March 2024, url
300 Belgium, CEDOCA, Irak: De veiligheidsstilatue in de Koerdische Autonome Regio [Iraq: The security situation in the Kurdish Autonomous Region] [source: expert on the security situation in Iraq, interviewed in June 2023, identity and location not disclosed to ensure the safety of this source], 28 September 2023, url, p. 17
July 2023 CPT report\textsuperscript{301} found 2022 to be the ‘deadliest year since 2015 for civilians in Northern Iraq under Turkish military bombardments’.\textsuperscript{302}

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

**Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war**

Years of insecurity and stability concerns have resulted in significant damage to infrastructure.\textsuperscript{306} Apart from ACAPS\textsuperscript{307} reporting, from November 2022 and June 2023, that public infrastructure continued to be the target of ‘sporadic attacks by armed groups and frequent air strikes’ against the PKK,\textsuperscript{308} no further publicly available information could be found on recent damage to civilian infrastructure caused by the conflict during the reference period. In the reference period, wildfires resulting from aerial bombardments were reported and local residents complained of aerial attacks causing destruction of agricultural land and farms.\textsuperscript{309} Most reports on this subject deal with reconstruction efforts. Information on reconstruction efforts and related issues is outlined in the following paragraphs.

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

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{301} Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT) describes itself as ‘an international violence-reduction and human rights organization.’ CPT, About us, n.d., url
\textsuperscript{302} CPT, Civilian Casualties of Turkish Bombardments in Northern Iraq in 2022, 31 July 2023, url
\textsuperscript{303} Please note that at the time of writing, only the 2023 published annual report (Explosive Violence Monitor 2022) containing the figures for 2022 was available. Figures covering 2023 were expected to be published in the course of 2024.
\textsuperscript{304} AOAV is a research and advocacy organisation that records incidents and resulting casualties caused by explosive weapons at the global level. For more information about AOAV see AOAV, What do we do?, n.d., url
\textsuperscript{305} AOAV, Explosive Violence Monitor 2022, 24 April 2023, url, p. 11
\textsuperscript{306} UNICEF, Climate Landscape Analysis For Children And Young People In Iraq, August 2023, url, p. 2
\textsuperscript{307} ACAPS describes itself as an ‘independent analytical’ organisation that monitors the humanitarian situation in crisis areas around the world to help ‘humanitarian workers, influencers, fundraisers, and donors make better-informed decisions and respond more effectively to disasters’. ACAPS, Who we are, n.d., url
\textsuperscript{308} ACAPS, Humanitarian Access Overview, July 2023, url, p. 18
\textsuperscript{309} Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, url
\textsuperscript{310} UNICEF, Iraq, 12 December 2023, url, p. 2
\textsuperscript{311} ACAPS, Humanitarian Access Overview, July 2023, url, p. 18
\textsuperscript{312} IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Progress Toward Durable Solutions in Iraq, August 2023, url, p. 6
\textsuperscript{313} USDOS, 2022 Country Reports on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, url, p. 15
\end{footnotesize}
and livelihood ‘would improve conditions to support sustainable returns’. For more information on conflict-induced displacement and return, please see section Conflict-induced displacement and return of this report.

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

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

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

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314 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Progress Toward Durable Solutions in Iraq, August 2023, url, p. 6
315 Hadad, H., From shock and awe to stability and flaws: Iraq’s post-invasion journey, ECFR, 25 May 2023, url
316 Exchange rates from European Commission, Exchange rate (InforEuro), n.d., url, accessed on 20 March 2024
318 Exchange rates from European Commission, Exchange rate (InforEuro), n.d., url, accessed on 20 March 2024
319 HRW, Iraq: Political Infighting Blocking Reconstruction of Sinjar, 6 June 2023, url
320 Al Jazeera, Analysis: Iraq’s new budget may hamper more than it helps, 26 June 2023, url
321 ACAPS, Humanitarian Access Overview, July 2023, url, p. 18
322 UNOCHA, 2023 Humanitarian Transition Overview: Iraq, 27 February 2023, url, p. 9
323 UNOCHA, 2023 Humanitarian Transition Overview: Iraq, 27 February 2023, url, p. 15
During the reference period (February 2023 to 28 March 2024), EPIC, the Enabling Peace in Iraq Centre, documented 76 IED and ERW incidents with civilian and non-civilian casualties. These 76 incidents resulted in 103 people injured, and 58 others killed.\textsuperscript{325}

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

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


\textsuperscript{326} ICBL describes itself as ‘a global network of non-governmental organizations, active in some 100 countries, that works for a world free of antipersonnel landmines, where landmine survivors can lead fulfilling lives.’ ICBL, About us, n.d., url

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

\textsuperscript{328} ICBL: Landmine Monitor 2023, November 2023, url, p. 42

\textsuperscript{329} CMC, Cluster Munition Monitor 2023, 5 September 2023, url, p. 51
According to the UNSG, mine clearance continued in Iraq\textsuperscript{330} with a total of 1.9 million square metres cleared of EO by the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Basrah and Ninewa governorates between 25 January 2023 and 25 January 2024.\textsuperscript{331}

As the UNSG indicated in reports covering the period from 25 January 2023 to 25 January 2024, ERW were responsible for the majority of civilian casualties.\textsuperscript{332} Between 11 May and 31 December 2022, the country task force on monitoring and reporting grave violations against children in armed conflict documented the killing of 10 boys and 2 girls and the maiming of 14 boys and 1 girl due to ERW.\textsuperscript{333}

By the end of 2022,\textsuperscript{334} with a total of 3,175 cluster munition-related deaths, Iraq ranked third among the countries with the ‘highest number of casualties, for all time,’ in the Cluster Munition Monitor dataset.\textsuperscript{335} A September 2023 publication by the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC)\textsuperscript{336} stated that in 2022 the annual number of casualties from cluster munition remnants in Iraq had increased, with 41 casualties in 2022 compared to 33 in 2021 and 31 in 2020, reaching the highest annual number since 2010. In 2022, the majority of victims of cluster munitions remnants in Iraq were children.\textsuperscript{337} In November 2023, ICBL reported that mines and ERW caused 169 casualties in Iraq in 2022.\textsuperscript{338}

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

**Conflict-induced displacement and return**

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

\textsuperscript{330} UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, url, para. 71
\textsuperscript{333} UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, url, para. 59; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, url, para. 55
\textsuperscript{334} Please note that at the time of writing, only the 2023 published annual report (Cluster Munition Monitor 2023) containing the figures for 2022 was available. Figures covering 2023 were expected to be published in the course of 2024.
\textsuperscript{335} CMC, Cluster Munition Monitor 2023, 5 September 2023, url, p. 45
\textsuperscript{336} CMC describes itself as ‘a global civil society campaign working to eradicate cluster munitions, prevent further casualties and put an end to the suffering caused by these weapons.’ CMC, About us, n.d., url
\textsuperscript{337} CMC, Cluster Munition Monitor 2023, 5 September 2023, url, pp. 48-49
\textsuperscript{338} ICBL, Landmine Monitor 2023 [Table], November 2023, url, p. 54
\textsuperscript{339} ESCWA, Trends and Impacts in Conflict Settings No. 7; Climate, peace and security in the Arab region, 2 November 2023, url, p. 34
Years after the official defeat of ISIL in Iraq, more than 1 million Iraqis remain internally displaced, primarily in the KRI. In April 2023, the last official IDP camp in federal Iraq was closed by the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displacement ‘with little advance notice and despite concerns about camp residents’ safety in their areas of origin’. Areas where residents were forced to flee at the outset of the war against ISIL continue to experience a security vacuum, and the risk of attacks continues to make returning difficult for its residents. In early 2023, ‘the largest increase in displacement’ reportedly took place in disputed areas, including cases of secondary displacement due to the resurgence of violence; the ‘places that have seen further displacement’ were Sinjar district (Ninewa governorate), Al-Baaj district (Ninewa governorate), and Khanaqin (Diyala governorate).

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

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

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340 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, IRAQ Master List Report 131 (September-December 2023), March 2024, url, p. 1
341 HRW, World Report 2024 – Iraq, 11 January 2024, url
342 Hadad, H., From shock and awe to stability and flaws: Iraq’s post-invasion journey, ECFR, 25 May 2023, url
343 HRW, World Report 2024 – Iraq, 11 January 2024, url
344 IDMC, Iraq: Internal Displacement Updates, as of 26 March 2024, url
345 Rudaw, [Turkish warplanes bomb 4 empty villages in Amadiyah], 18 January 2024, url
346 IDMC, Iraq: Internal Displacement Updates, as of 26 March 2024, url
347 HRW, World Report 2024 – Iraq, 11 January 2024, url
348 Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, url, p. 1
349 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, IRAQ Master List Report 131 (September-December 2023), March 2024, url, p. 1
350 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, IRAQ Master List Report 131 (September-December 2023), March 2024, url, p. 3
Although a general decrease in the number of IDPs across the country was reported, IOM documented 6,394 newly displaced persons during the period between September and December 2023. 93% of these cases involved IDPs experiencing secondary displacement. In addition, between September and December 2023, 406 cases of failed return were reported, the majority of which involved persons originating from the districts of Sinjar, Fallujah and Al-Baaj.

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

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351 IOM, IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, IRAQ Master List Report 131 (September-December 2023), March 2024, url
352 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, IRAQ Master List Report 131 (September-December 2023), March 2024, url, p. 2
353 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, IRAQ Master List Report 131 (September-December 2023), March 2024, url, p. 1
354 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, IRAQ Master List Report 131 (September-December 2023), March 2024, url, p. 7
355 IRC, IRC Protection Needs Overview: Monitoring and Trends; October 2022 – March 2023, 3 July 2023, url, p. 4
2. Security situation and conflict impact on civilians by governorates

2.1. Anbar

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

General description of governorate

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

356 UN IAU, Iraq District Map, January 2014, url
357 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Al-Anbar Governorate Reference Map 2020, 27 May 2020, url
359 UN IAU, Anbar Governorate Profile, March 2009, url, accessed 5 February 2024, p. 1
Falluja), Haditha, Heet (Hit), Rawa (Ra’ua), and Ramadi (Al Ramadi). The capital of Anbar is Ramadi.

For 2022, the Iraqi Central Statistical Organization (CSO) estimated the governorate’s population at 1,963,346. 363

Anbar’s population is predominately Sunni Arab and has historically had a strong tribal structure. For further information on Anbar governorate’s ethnic and religious composition and economy, please refer to section 2.1 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

Armed actors’ presence and control

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

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

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

In its 2022 Country Report on Terrorism, the US Department of State (USDOS) stated that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) ‘sought to reestablish footholds in Anbar’. According to the UN Secretary-General, Anbar governorate was of logistical importance to...
ISIL. In the first half of 2023, some senior ISIL leaders were relocated to the Syrian-Iraqi border region of the governorate, where the group increased its activities. In a January 2024 report, the UN Security Council stated that ISIL was present in the western border region of Anbar governorate with around 160 to 200 fighters. The group reportedly had cells in remote western areas, including in the Wadi Hawran area, and its attacks continued, including in the city Al-Rutba. Temporary checkpoints were established by the group ‘to make its presence felt’ and to target military facilities. The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and the Critical Threats Project (CTP) reported that the existence of a large ISIL camp in Wadi Hawran in February 2023 indicated ‘a sizeable ISIS [ISIL] presence’ in the Anbar deserts.

Recent security trends

There was reportedly an increase in attacks on US forces in Iraq since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas conflict in early October 2023. However, as of February 2024, attacks of Iran-affiliated groups in Iraq reportedly appeared to have ceased. In the reference period the Ain Al-Asad military base in the north-east of central Anbar governorate was repeatedly targeted by groups belonging to the so-called Islamic Resistance in Iraq. Iran-linked groups belonging to the Islamic Resistance targeted the site with drones and rockets.

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373 UNSG, Sixteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/76, 1 February 2023, url, para. 29
375 UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, url, para. 50
376 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, May 24, 2023, 26 May 2023, url
377 Reuters, Drones target Iraq’s Ain al-Asad airbase, no casualties, damage – sources, 31 October 2023, url
379 USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, url, p. 19
380 Reuters, Rockets, drones hit Iraqi bases housing U.S. forces, 20 October 2023, url
381 The so-called Islamic Resistance emerged as an umbrella term in October 2023 in the context of the Israel-Hamas conflict, with the aim of demonstrating unity among Iran-affiliated armed groups; TWI, Profile: The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, last updated 30 October 2023, url
382 Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, url, p. 7; ISW and CTP, Iran Update, December 11, 2023, 11 December 2023, url, p. 14; ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 27, 2024, 27 January 2024, url, p. 9; Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes (KW04/2024), 22 January 2024, url, p. 6; Washington Post (The), Iranian-linked militants strike Iraqi base housing U.S. troops, 21 January 2024, url
383 France 24, US says Islamic Resistance in Iraq group carried out attack on base in Jordan, 31 January 2024, url; EPIC, ISHM: November 30 – December 7, 2023, 7 December 2023, url
384 ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 27, 2024, 27 January 2024, url, p. 9
385 International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., url; Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, url, p. 7; Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes (KW04/2024), 22 January 2024, url, p. 6
On the other hand, the US carried out airstrikes in Anbar governorate, such as in Al-Qaim (Al Kaim) and Al-Rutba districts. Largely Shi'ite militia groups, including the Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) and other PMF groups, were targeted in the reference period by US airstrikes.

ISIL continued to carry out attacks in a number of Iraqi governorates, including Anbar, for example, in and around Al-Rutba city, Al-Nukhayb and the Arar Border area in Al-Rutba district. The US Department of Defense (USDOD) reported increased activity in Anbar governorate between October and December 2023. Sources reported several instances of kidnappings and killings of shepherds by ISIL in the reference period. It was further reported that the group sporadically targeted barracks and checkpoints of ISF, including in Anbar governorate, and also targeted Tribal Mobilization Forces (TMF).

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

**Security incidents**

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

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386 ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 24, 2024, 24 January 2024, url, p. 7; Al-Monitor, Iraq slams latest US airstrikes on Kataib Hezbollah sites, 24 January 2024, url; CNN, What we know about the US strikes in Iraq and Syria, 3 February 2023, url
388 Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes (KW06/2024), 5 February 2024, url, p. 3; Iraqi News, Iraq declares three days of mourning following US strikes in Anbar, 3 February 2024, url
389 ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 24, 2024, 24 January 2024, url; Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, url, p. 9; Al-Monitor, Iraq slams latest US airstrikes on Kataib Hezbollah sites, 24 January 2024, url; Al-Monitor, US strikes kill eight pro-Iran fighters in Iraq, angering Baghdad, 21 November 2023, url
390 CNN, What we know about the US strikes in Iraq and Syria, 3 February 2023, url
391 UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, url, para. 24
392 UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, url, para. 24; ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update [figure 1], July 5, 2023, 7 July 2023, url
393 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update [figure 1], July 5, 2023, 7 July 2023, url
394 USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, url, p. 16
395 Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, داعش ينتقل لخطف رعاة الأغنام قرب المدن المحررة في العراق: [ISIL resorts to kidnapping shepherds close to liberated cities in Iraq], 16 September 2023, url; Al-Maaloma, استشهاد اثنين من رعاة الأغنام بهجوم إرهابي في صحراء الأنبار [Two shepherds killed in terrorist attack in Anbar desert], 11 September 2023, url
396 AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, url
397 EPIC, ISHM: February 23 - March 2, 2023, 2 March 2023, url
399 EPIC, ISHM: February 23 - March 2, 2023, 2 March 2023, url
400 EPIC, ISHM: January 11 – 18, 2024, 18 January 2024, url; EPIC, ISHM: September 21 – 28, 2023, 28 September 2023, url
401 EPIC, ISHM: January 11 – 18, 2024, 18 January 2024, url
402 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), url
were recorded in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in Heet district (see Figure 12). According to ACLED data, Islamic Resistance in Iraq and the Global Coalition against Daesh were involved in the majority of incidents (coded as either ‘Actor1’ or ‘Actor2’), followed by the ISF and associated actors against ISIL.

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

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

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

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

![Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI in Anbar governorate (1 February 2023 - 31 March 2024)](image)

**Figure 13. Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI in Anbar governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.**

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

**Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

408 Shafaq News, "War of the towers raging: Iraqi forces launch plan to prolong and expand fight", 7 August 2023, [url]

409 Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url], p. 61
Conflict-induced displacement and return

No information could be found on new conflict-induced displacements occurring in Anbar during the reference period. IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)\footnote{Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023.} statistics as of December 2023 estimate the number of IDPs originating from Anbar to be 126,303.\footnote{IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024.} As of December 2023, 1,548,936 individuals had returned to the governorate\footnote{IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024.} since IOM started recording returns in April 2015.\footnote{IOM Iraq, DTM – Methodology, n.d.} The districts of Ramadi (Al Ramadi) and Falluja (Al Falluja) make up the highest numbers of the returnee population.\footnote{IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024.} No information could be found on new returns occurring in Anbar during the reference period. In March 2023, Amnesty International (AI) reported that IDPs faced obstacles returning to their places of origin in Anbar. AI elaborated that this was due to ‘risks of arbitrary arrest and other harassment by armed actors and security forces, as well as a lack of livelihood opportunities and access to services’.\footnote{USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, April 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023, 3 August 2023.}
2.2. Babil

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

**General description of governorate**

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

For 2022, the Iraqi Central Statistical Organization (CSO) estimated the governorate’s population at 2,288,456.\textsuperscript{418}

\textsuperscript{416} UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{417} UNOCHA and iMMAP, Babil Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{418} Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023, الباب الثاني [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, \url{url}, p. 8
The majority of the governorate’s population is Shia Arab and there is a Sunni minority. For further information on Babil governorate’s ethno-religious composition and economy, please refer to section 2.2 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

Armed actors’ presence and control

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

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

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

Recent security trends

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

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419 AP, Shattered by war, Sunni Arabs despair over future in Iraq, 10 September 2017, url
421 Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, url, p. 9
422 ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 24, 2024, 24 January 2024, url, p. 7; NINA, A member of the Popular Mobilization Forces killed in north of Hilla, 13 July 2023, url
423 ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 24, 2024, 24 January 2024, url, p. 7
424 NINA, Head of Iraqi Islamic Supreme Council condemns US attack on headquarters of the PMU, 26 December 2023, url
425 Shafaq News, About 20 injured in US airstrike on PMF headquarters in central Babil in reply to Erbil targeting (video), 26 December 2023, url
426 ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 24, 2024, 24 January 2024, url, p. 7
427 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, May 24, 2023, 26 May 2023, url
428 Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, url, p. 9; ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 24, 2024, 24 January 2024, url, p. 7; ISW and CTP, Iran Update, February 5, 2024, 5 February 2024, url, p. 7; NINA, Head of Iraqi Islamic Supreme Council condemns US attack on headquarters of the PMU, 26 December 2023, url
430 ISW and CTP, Iran Update, December 26, 2023, 26 December 2023, url, p. 1, 7
According to a September 2023 report of the UN Secretary-General, sporadic attacks on convoys of ‘Iraqi companies contracted to carry supplies for the international counter-Da’esh [ISIL] coalition’ continued in a number of governorates, including Babil, in the first half of 2023, causing no casualties. The attacks, which were carried out by Ashab Al-Kahf, the International Resistance, and the group Revenge for Muhandis, resumed in the first quarter of 2023 for the first time since August 2022. In May 2023, ISW and CTP reported that Iranian-affiliated militias and ISF frequently disrupted ISIL attacks in northern Babil governorate. The National Iraqi News Agency (NINA) reported sporadic cases of tribal conflict in Babil governorate, which resulted in injuries.

Security incidents

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

432 UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, url, para. 17
433 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, May 24, 2023, 26 May 2023, url
434 NINA, [Three people injured in tribal conflict south of Hilla], 1 December 2023, url; NINA, [Six people injured in tribal conflict north of Hilla], 5 November 2023, url; NINA, [Three people injured in tribal conflict in Babil], 20 October 2023, url
435 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), url
Figure 14. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Babil governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

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

Civilian casualties

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

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

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

As of the end of 2022, around 633,031 square metres of Babil governorate’s area were reported to be cluster-munition contaminated. The NINA reported the death of one man by a landmine explosion north of Hilla city in August 2023. Further relevant information on explosive remnants of war could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

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436 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), URL
437 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
438 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
439 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
440 Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, URL, p. 61
441 NINA, وفاة شخص نتيجة انفجار لغم ارضي شمال الحلة [Death of Individual by landmine explosion north of Hilla], 3 August 2023, URL
Conflict-induced displacement and return

No information could be found on new conflict-induced displacements occurring in Babil during the reference period. IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) statistics as of December 2023 estimate the number of IDPs originating from Babil to be 44,099.\textsuperscript{442}

As of December 2023, 1,860 individuals had returned to their places of origin in Babil since IOM started recording returns in April 2015.\textsuperscript{444} The district of Al-Musayab (Al Mussyab) constitutes the only district with a returnee population.\textsuperscript{445} No information could be found on new returns occurring in Babil during the reference period.

\textsuperscript{442} Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, \url{url}, p. 1
\textsuperscript{443} IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{444} IOM Iraq, DTM – Methodology, n.d., \url{url}
\textsuperscript{445} IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, \url{url}
2.3. Baghdad

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

General description of governorate

Baghdad governorate is situated in the Tigris plain in the centre of Iraq and is the smallest of all governorates in terms of surface area (4 555 square kilometres). It is the location of Baghdad City, the capital of Iraq and the country’s largest city. Baghdad City is a major economic hub. 447 The governorate is divided into a total of 14 districts. Baghdad City is made up of Adhamiya, Karkh, Karrada, Khadimiyah, Mansour, Sadr City (Thawra 1 and 2), Al-Rashid, Rusafa and 9 Nissan (‘new Baghdad’) districts, while the rest of Baghdad governorate comprises districts of Al-Mada’in, Taji, Tarmiya, Mahmudiya, and Abu Ghraib. 448 As of 2022, Baghdad City records an estimated population of 8.75 million, 450 the highest population

446 UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, url
447 NCCI, Baghdad Governorate Profile, updated December 2015, url, pp. 1-2; Bahry L. & Marr P., A. Baghdad, Encyclopedia Britannica, 10 February 2024, url
448 IAU, Baghdad Governorate Profile, November 2010, url, p. 1
449 NCCI, Baghdad Governorate Profile, updated December 2015, url, pp. 1-2
450 Shafaq News, Baghdad: A Metropolis city struggles with population surges and traffic woes, 8 February 2024, url
density rate in the country. Baghdad governorate’s population in 2022 was estimated to be 9,006,001, representing the most populous governorate in the country.\footnote{Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 البديل الثاني [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, url, p. 8}

Detailed information on the general description of governorate and ethno-religious composition is available in the \textit{EUAA COI report Iraq – Security Situation (January 2022)}.\footnote{Shafaq News, Ministry of Planning reveals Iraq’s population estimates for 2023, 6 December 2023, url}

**Armed actors’ presence and control**

For information on the conflict background, please refer to section 2.3.2 of the previous \textit{EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022)}.\footnote{USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, url, p. 19}

The Baghdad Operations Command (BOC) is headquartered in Baghdad.\footnote{Sirri, O., When the Lights Go Out: Iraq in Revolution, Society and Space, 10 February 2020, url} The BOC was established in 2006 as part of Operation Enforcing the Law.\footnote{ISW, The Leadership and Purpose of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces, 19 March 2024, url} Its commander is reportedly a member of Asa‘ib Ahl Al-Haq\footnote{ISW, The Leadership and Purpose of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces, 19 March 2024, url} and was allegedly found responsible of the killing of Al-Sadr’s supporters during clashes occurred in Baghdad between Sadrists and Iran-backed groups in August 2022.\footnote{AP News, A French soldier is killed in clashes with extremists in Iraq, 29 August 2023, url}

During the reference period, the ISF conducted anti-ISIL in several areas, including Baghdad.\footnote{ISL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, 31 January 2024, url, para 35}

**ISIL**

Despite its territorial defeat, ISIL was still operational in Baghdad governorate.\footnote{USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2022 - Iraq, 20 March 2023, url, pp. 20, 21} In the reporting period, it continued to maintain a presence in its strongholds in the north of Baghdad, namely in Tarmiya district,\footnote{AP News, A French soldier is killed in clashes with extremists in Iraq, 29 August 2023, url} conducting asymmetric attacks against ISF\footnote{USG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), Report of the Secretary-General, 25 January 2024, para 19, url} consisting in IEDs, small-arms ambushes or assassinations.\footnote{USG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), Report of the Secretary-General, 25 January 2024, para 19, url} Attacks were conducted mostly through light weapons and explosive devices targeting government, security officials, community leaders, civilian and military facilities.\footnote{USG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), Report of the Secretary-General, 25 January 2024, para 19, url} In response, ISF continued to conduct...
counter-terrorism operations.\footnote{UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), Report of the Secretary-General, 26 September 2023, \url{url}, para 24; UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), Report of the Secretary-General, 25 January 2024, para 19, \url{url}} According to Musings on Iraq, Tarmiya has become one of the most violent areas in Iraq\footnote{Musings on Iraq, No Ramadan Offensive By The Islamic State Yet, 3 April 2023, \url{url}} and the main target for ISIL operations for unknown reasons.\footnote{Musings on Iraq, Violence Drops In Iraq For The 2nd Month, 5 March 2023, \url{url}} It is noted that ISIL was likely supporting its cell in Tarmiya and in northern Baghdad Belts through ground lines of communication originating from the north through land held by Iran-backed PMF forces. ISF is reportedly unsuccessful in contrasting its presence from the northern Baghdad Belts. In February 2023, Critical Threats Project (CTP) and Institute for the Study of War (ISW) argued that ISIL will continue to attack ISF forces in the northern Belts unless a major counter-ISIL operation is launched.\footnote{Critical Threats/ISW, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, February 22, 2023, 22 February 2023, \url{url}, p. 2}

Lead Inspector General’s quarterly report covering the period between 1 October and 31 December 2023 stated that the rise in the Iranian-backed Iraqi militia attacks against US forces and the US retaliatory strikes had a negative effect on the ability of the Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) to support ISF and KSF, as militia-led attacks diverted CJT-OIR’s resources and focus from its advisory mission.\footnote{USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government activities related to Iraq & Syria, Lead Inspector General Report to The United States Congress, October 1, 2023–December 31, 2023, \url{url}, p. 18}

**US-led coalition forces**

As of January 2024, 2 500 US forces are still deployed in Iraq as part of the US-led coalition set up to fight ISIL.\footnote{Al Jazeera, US, Iraq begin formal talks on winding down US-led military coalition, 25 January 2024, \url{url}} Reportedly, advisors and contractors working with the US-led international military coalition are hosted by Iraqi government-administered military bases and at the US Embassy in Baghdad,\footnote{ACLED, The Muqawama and Its Enemies Shifting Patterns in Iran-Backed Shiite Militia Activity in Iraq, 23 May 2023, \url{url}} which continues to be the largest US Embassy in the world.\footnote{USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government activities related to Iraq & Syria, Lead Inspector General Report to The United States Congress, October 1, 2023–December 31, 2023, \url{url}, p. 51}

As of December 2023, the US-led Coalition’s Military Advisory Group continued to provide advisory support and assistance to ISF, including the Iraqi Air Enterprise, in Baghdad and Erbil.\footnote{Reuters, Exclusive: Iraq seeks quick exit of US forces but no deadline set, PM says, 10 January 2024, \url{url}; VOA, Iran Backs Iraqi Call to End Presence of US-Led Force, 8 January 2024, \url{url}; Rudaw, Iraq threatens to ‘terminate’ anti-ISIS coalition mission following US strike, 8 February 2024, \url{url}} As the attacks between Iran-backed militias and US forces escalated following the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas armed conflict on 7 October 2023, the Iraqi government called to put an end to the presence of the US-led international military coalition in Iraq.\footnote{Guardian (The), US troops attacked in Iraq and Syria as west warns of ‘spillover’ from Israel conflict, 20 October 2023, \url{url}} Starting from 20 October 2023, the US reduced its employees...
from the Embassy in Baghdad due to ‘increased security threats against the U.S. government personnel and interests’. 476


**Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF)**

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

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

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476 USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government activities related to Iraq & Syria, Lead Inspector General Report to The United States Congress, October 1, 2023–December 31, 2023, [url], p. 51
477 Malik H., Knights M., Profile: The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, TWI, 21 October 2023, [url]
478 Al Kaabi A., Knights M., Kataib Hezbollah’s Escalating Feud with the Iraqi Security Forces, TWI, 19 March 2023, [url]
479 Knights M. et. al, Profile: Kataib Hezbollah, TWI, 21 October 2023, [url]
480 Knights M., Profile: Asa’ib Ahl Al-Haq, TWI, 27 April 2021, [url]
481 Knights M., Profile: Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, TWI, 27 April 2021, [url]
482 Knights M., Removing All Militias From Baghdad’s International Zone, TWI, 31 August 2022, [url]
485 Militia Spotlight is a search policy analysis created by Washington Institute for Near East Policy which monitors activities of Iran-backed militia in Iraq and Syria, [url], n.d.
488 Knights M. et. al, How Tehran-Backed Terrorist Organizations and Militias Captured the Iraqi State in: CTC (Combating Terrorism Center) Sentinel, Vol. 16, Issue 11, December 2023, [url], p. 11
Iran-backed militias were also consolidating their economic power in Baghdad, taking over from the Iraqi Army and Federal Police, through the Muhandis General Company, a PMF-owned commercial entity established in November 2022. Kata’ib Hezbollah and Asaib Ahl al-Haq were reportedly growing illicit property empires. Al Sadr’s Saraya al-Salam militia had a strong presence in Baghdad and its relations with PMF were reportedly hostile due to competition over legal and illegal economic power.

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

Recent security trends

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

US-Iran escalating tensions

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

489 Al Kaabi A., Knights M., Kataib Hezbollah’s Escalating Feud with the Iraqi Security Forces, TWI, 19 March 2023, url
491 Knights M., al Kaabi A., Coordination Framework Militias Exposed for Stealing Baghdad Real Estate, TWI, 31 August 2023, url
492 Hudson, Post-Election Iraq and Intra-Shiite War, 26 September 2022, url
495 USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, url, p. 52
496 Crisis24, Iraq Country Report, Security, 21 November 2023, url
the south of Baghdad, attacks on US convoys transporting material from and to military bases have been more frequent as convoy routes are more concentrated in the area.497

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

As a result, in the same month, several protests occurred in Baghdad against the US, with the direct involvement of Al Sadr’s supporters.504

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

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

497 ACLED, The Muqawama and Its Enemies Shifting Patterns in Iran-Backed Shiite Militia Activity in Iraq, 23 May 2023, url. Source did not provide additional information on the definition of ‘un-islamic activites’.
500 Al Jazeera, Who are the Islamic Resistance in Iraq?, 10 February 2024, url. Al Monitor, Iraqi militias escalate rhetoric against US, threatening more attacks, 9 April 2023, url.
502 Al Jazeera, Iraq slams US strikes that killed eight pro-Iran fighters, 22 November 2023, url. Al Jazeera, Iraq slams US strikes that killed eight pro-Iran fighters, 22 November 2023, url. Rudaw, Iraqi MPs call for expelling coalition forces, 13 January 2024, url. Rudaw, Iraqi MPs call for expelling coalition forces, 13 January 2024, url.
backed militia, Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HaN), and a deputy commander of PMF. According to PMF media, other six persons were wounded due to the strike. The US airstrike has been strongly condemned by Prime Minister Al-Sudani, whose office declared his intention to end US presence in the country. Reportedly, HaN conducted 95 out of 136 attacks against US forces since 17 October 2023, when the first wave of attacks took place. On 7 February 2024, a US drone strike killed a leader of the Iranian-backed militia, Kata’ib Hezbollah (KH), and two of his guards, in the eastern part of Baghdad. KH has been deemed responsible by the US for the drone attack on an US base in Jordan on 28 January 2024, causing the death of 3 US soldiers and the injuries of more than 40. No civilian casualties have been recorded as a result of the attack.

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

Intra Iran-backed militias rivalry

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

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512 See: Knights M., Profile: Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, TWI, 27 April 2021, [url]
513 AP News, Airstrike in central Baghdad kills Iran-backed militia leader as regional tensions escalate, 4 January 2024, [url]; International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Iraq, January 2024, [url]; New Arab (The), Explainer: Who was ‘Abu Taqwa’, the Iraqi militia head assassinated by the US?, 5 January 2024, [url]
514 Reuters, Pentagon says not planning a US withdrawal from Iraq, 8 January 2024, [url]; EPIC, ISHM: December 28, 2023 – January 4, 2024, 4 January 2024, [url]
516 BBC, US drone strike kills Iran-backed militia leader in Baghdad, 8 February 2024, [url]; Al Jazeera, Who are the Islamic Resistance in Iraq?, 10 February 2024, [url]
517 BBC, US drone strike kills Iran-backed militia leader in Baghdad, 8 February 2024, [url]; New York times (The), The U.S. Strike in Baghdad Kills Iranian-Backed Militia, 7 February 2024, [url]; AP News, US drone strike in Baghdad kills high-ranking militia leader linked to attacks on American troops, 8 February 2024, [url]
518 International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch – Iraq, February 2024, [url]; Reuters, Iraqi armed groups dial down U.S. attacks on request of Iran commander, 18 February 2024, [url]; ISW, Iran Update, January 31, 2024, [url]
519 New York Times (The), After U.S. Strikes, Iran’s Proxies Scale Back Attacks on American Bases, 27 February 2024, [url]
520 New Arab (The), US drones remain active over Iraq’s airspace despite fragile ceasefire, 1 March 2024, [url]
521 CFRI, Iraq shaken by attacks and political unrest: what can we expect?, 27 December 2023, [url]; Knights M., Profile: Asaib Ahl al-Haq, TWI, 27 April 2021, [url]; International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq, December 2023, [url]
523 EPIC, ISHM: April 6 – 13, 2023, 13 April 2023, [url]; Shafaq News, Ending tension between Saraya al-Sadr and Kataib Hezbollah that almost sparked an armed clash south of Baghdad (photos + video), 9 April 2023, [url]
October 2022, clashes between KH military units within PMF and Iraqi Security Forces were also recorded in Baghdad.\textsuperscript{524}

Security incidents

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

![Figure 15](chart.png)

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

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

\textsuperscript{524} Al Kaabi A., Knights M., Kataib Hezbollah’s Escalating Feud with the Iraqi Security Forces, TWI, 19 May 2023, \url{url}

\textsuperscript{525} EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), \url{url}

\textsuperscript{526} EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), \url{url}

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

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

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

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

Conflict-induced displacement and return

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

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

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

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528 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
529 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
530 Mine Action Review, Clearing the Mines 2022, 1 October 2022, url, p. 185
531 UNSG, Assistance in mine action, Report of the Secretary-General, 31 July 2023, url, para 26
532 REACH, Research Terms of Reference Al-Latifya Area-Based Assessment (ABA) IRQ2207 Iraq (October 2022) Version 1, 13 December 2022, url. On the IDP movement’s intentions in Al-Latifya, see: REACH, IDPs in Iraq – Intentions and Profiling: Informal Sites (April 2022), 11 May 2022, url
533 EUAA analysis based on IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File], 31 December 2023, url
534 EUAA analysis based on IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File], 31 December 2023, url
With reference to the latest IDP movement's trends, in the reporting period between 1 May and 31 August 2023, IOM recorded an increase of 150 IDPs in Mahmodiya district. The source did not provide information on the reason for displacement.  

2.4. Diyala

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

General description of governorate

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

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536 UN JAU, Iraq District Map, January 2014, url
537 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Diyala Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, url
538 Hussein, H.A., Iraq’s Disputed Territories and the Potential Impact of the Upcoming Provincial Elections, TWI, 12 December 2023, url
539 UNHCR Iraq, Iraq: Kurdistan Region and Northern Governorates [Map], 22 January 2023, url
The governorate’s population in 2022 was estimated at 1,814,368. The diverse population includes Arabs, Kurds and Turkmen, with all three groups comprising both Sunni and Shia communities.

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

**Armed actors’ presence and control**

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

The Diyala Operations Command is headquartered in Baquba city; Iran-backed militias under the PMF were also present in the governorate, as were Border Guard forces stationed in the eastern areas bordering Iran. There were efforts by the Badr Organisation to maintain and strengthen its security influence in the governorate, as seen in the deployment of its 1st, 23rd, 24th, and 110th Brigades to Diyala in March 2023. This was followed by the appointment of the Badr-affiliated Major General Akram Mudannaf as head of the Diyala Operations Command in May 2023.

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

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540 Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023، الباب الثاني [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, url, p. 8
541 UN IAU, Diyala Governorate Profile, March 2009, url, p. 1
542 Izady, M., Central Iraq: Ethnoreligious Composition in 2020 (summary) [Map], n.d., url
543 USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, url, p. 19
544 New Arab (The), Iraq: Nine people killed in Diyala farm ‘massacre’, 21 February 2023, url
545 EPIC, ISHM: June 1 – 8, 2023, 8 June 2023, url
546 ISW and CTP, Iran Update, March 16, 2023, 16 March 2023, url
547 ISW and CTP, Iran Update, May 2, 2023, 2 May 2023, url
548 PUK Media, Peshmerga Ministry: We condemn the terrorist acts that targeted the army, 22 January 2022, url
549 PUK Media, Security operation launched in Saladin, Diyala, 15 June 2022, url; INA, Army Chief of Staff issues directives to security forces in Diyala, 19 July 2022, url; Shafaq News, Explosive device injures senior Iraqi army officers in Diyala, 18 September 2023, url
550 ISW and CTP, Iran Update, May 19, 2023, 19 May 2023, url
551 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, March 1, 2023, 3 March 2023, url
552 Shafaq News, Diyala implements extensive security plan in al-Waqf basin, 22 May 2023, url
553 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, url
ISIL maintained its presence in Diyala, one of the governorates on which the group focused its operations in Iraq through small, decentralised cells and ‘outposts’. The group’s supply lines ran through mountainous areas where access and patrolling were difficult for the security forces. The group retained its ability to move freely and operate in and around the disputed areas, where it maintained strongholds and hideouts. A Peshmerga brigade commander based in Khanaqin was quoted as saying that ISIL militants were manoeuvring unguarded areas, including the outskirts of the Hamrin Basin and peripheral areas of Khanaqin. As of mid-2023, most of the leaders of the Iraqi branch of ISIL were reportedly present in the Hamrin Mountains. ISIL used these security gaps along the Iraqi Kurdistan border to enable attacks and supply its cells in mountain and desert zones. In April 2023, the group moved an unconfirmed number of fighters from Khanaqin to the Tooz Khurmatu-Kifri area.

**Recent security trends**

The overall security situation in Diyala governorate has been described as ‘challenging’ and ‘tense’. Apart from periodic ISIL attacks, the governorate saw sectarian violence, including the alleged killing of nine civilians by Shia militias in Al-Khalis governorate in February 2023. While most Sunnis displaced during the war against ISIL have returned to the governorate, they were frequently viewed with suspicion by authorities and neighbours due to their perceived links to the group. When ISIL remnants carried out attacks against civilians or security forces, it would often entail a spiral of retaliatory attacks.

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554 UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, url, para. 32
555 UNSG, Sixteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/76, 1 February 2023, url, para. 29
556 UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, url, para. 49
557 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, url
558 Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen ambtsbericht Irak [Country report Iraq], November 2023, url, p. 16
559 Shafaq News, Kurdish Peshmerga commander reveals ISIS’s hidden movement in Iraq’s border areas, 13 October 2023, url
561 UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, url, para. 32
562 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, url
563 RWG Iraq and REACH, Rapid assessment on returns and durable solutions (ReDS) Governorate Profiles – Diyala – Iraq, February 2023, url, p. 1
564 AP, Spiking violence strains sectarian ties in Iraqi province, 27 March 2023, url
565 Al Jazeera, Gunmen kill 11 in roadside attack in eastern Iraq, 1 December 2023, url; AP, Spiking violence strains sectarian ties in Iraqi province, 27 March 2023, url
566 AP, Spiking violence strains sectarian ties in Iraqi province, 27 March 2023, url
567 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, March 1, 2023, 3 March 2023, url; AP, Spiking violence strains sectarian ties in Iraqi province, 27 March 2023, url
568 AP, Spiking violence strains sectarian ties in Iraqi province, 27 March 2023, url
Killings were also committed between Shiite groups in the context of rival militias and their political and tribal allies fighting over influence, including control of high-ranking security positions and domination of lucrative networks of organised crime. Indeed, the first quarter of 2023 saw a series of instances of communal violence, including a complex militant attack on members of a local tribe in the Al-Muqdadiya district.

ISIL sustained a ‘low-grade insurgency’ in eastern Iraq, with Diyala being one of the governorates seeing a concentration of ISIL activity, including zones in and around the disputed areas. The group’s attacks have been described as asymmetrical as most of its operations were carried out with light weaponry and explosives, such as simple IEDs, targeted assassinations, small-arms ambushes. The Hamrin Mountains were among ISIL’s key zones of operation due to gaps in the presence of Iraqi and KRG forces. Attacks by suspected ISIL militants targeted Iraqi soldiers, military facilities, security and government officials, local community leaders, and other civilians, with several incidents reported in Al-Baquba (Baquba), Khanaqin, and Al-Muqdadiya districts.

In some deadly incidents, it could not be determined whether they were motivated by insurgency or tribal conflict, or whether an IED was recent or old. Several killings were
reported to have been carried out by unidentified perpetrators against civilians in Al-Baqua (Baquba), Baladruz, Khanaqin, and Al-Khalis.

In response to ISIL activity, the ISF continued to carry out anti-terrorism operations, including airstrikes targeting the ISIL hideouts in Kifri district, the Al-Waqf and Hawi Al-Azim areas, as well as in the Hamrin Mountains and Hamrin Lake area. Moreover, the security forces conducted ground operations, including an arrest campaign launched across the governorate in March 2023 and a joint security operation in the Diyala-Salah Al-Din border zone in February 2024. In June 2023, the Border Guard forces started a security campaign aiming to close illegal smuggling routes in the town of Qazaniyah on the border with Iran.

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 96 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Diyala governorate, of which 26 were coded as battles, 43 explosions/remote violence, and 27 incidents of violence against civilians. Security incidents were recorded in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in Al Baquba and Al Muqdadiya districts (see Figure 16). According to ACLED data, unidentified armed actors were involved in the majority of incidents coded as violence against civilians, whereas ISIL was mainly involved in incidents coded as battles, and explosions/remote violence against ISF and affiliated armed groups.

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587 NINA, The body of a civilian found in Baquba, 23 May 2023, url; NINA, A doctor assassinated in Baquba, 22 February 2023
588 NINA, A farmer killed by unknown gunmen in Diyala, 28 February 2023
589 NINA, The body of a young man found mysteriously killed in Diyala, 26 July 2023
590 NINA, The assassination of a civilian in Al-Khalis, in Diyala, 3 March 2023
592 Rudaw, Iraqi warplanes strike suspected ISIS members in Diyala, 7 May 2023, url
593 Asharq Al-Awsat, Iraqi Security Conducts a Successful Operation Against ISIS, 8 January 2024, url
594 Shafaq News, Iraqi forces destroy ISIS hideouts in Diyala, 5 February 2024, url
595 EPIC, ISHM: March 16 – 30, 2023, 30 March 2023, url
596 KirkukNow, Diyala: Special forces assigned by Prime Minister to impose security face political and tribal challenges, 19 March 2023, url
597 SABA, Iraqi forces start chasing Daesh elements in Diyala, Saladin, 7 February 2024, url
598 EPIC, ISHM: June 1 – 8, 2023, 8 June 2023, url; Financial Tribune, Baghdad Launches Plan to Close 20 Smuggling Routes With Iran, 9 June 2023, url
599 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), url
Figure 16. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Diyala governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.600

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 29 February 2024, the UCDP recorded 14 events leading to fatalities in Diyala governorate.601

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 43 civilian casualties in Diyala governorate.602

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 29 February 2024, the UCDP recorded 22 civilian deaths in Diyala governorate.603

600 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), url
601 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
602 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
603 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

No information on new conflict-related infrastructure damage occurring in the reference period could be found within the time constraints of this report. According to a February 2023 assessment of four Diyala sub-districts (located in Al-Muqdadiya, Al-Khalis, Kifri, and Khanaqin districts), the degree of destruction and damage to houses was ‘very high’. Government reconstruction efforts were assessed to be ‘either absent, delayed, or only limited to specific areas’. As of the end of 2022, the Mine Action Review did not report any cluster munition-contaminated areas in Diyala governorate. Several civilians were killed or injured by explosive remnants of war in Khanaqin district, Buhruz, Khan Bani Saad and Mandili subdistricts, and in the Al-Waqq Basin and in the Wadi Tursaq area.

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604 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
605 RWG Iraq and REACH, Rapid assessment on returns and durable solutions (ReDS) Governorate Profiles – Diyala – Iraq, February 2023, p. 2
607 Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, p. 61
608 EPIC, ISHM: February 23 – March 2, 2023, 2 March 2023, url
609 EPIC, ISHM: May 25 – June 1, 2023, 1 June 2023, url
610 EPIC, ISHM: March 21 – 28, 2024, 28 March 2024, url
611 NINA, A Child Killed And His Father Injured In An IED Explosion In Al-Waqq Basin, Northeast Of Baqubah, 22 September 2023, url
612 EPIC, ISHM: March 21 – 28, 2024, 28 March 2024, url
Conflicts-induced displacement and return

No information could be found on new conflict-induced displacements occurring in Diyala during the reference period. IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)\(^{613}\) statistics as of December 2023 estimate the number of IDPs originating from Diyala to be 71,208 IDPs.\(^{614}\)

The majority of Sunnis displaced from Diyala during the war against ISIL have returned.\(^{615}\) As of 31 December 2023, IOM recorded 241,236 returnees in the governorate.\(^{616}\) No information could be found on new returns occurring in Diyala during the reference period.

2.5. Kirkuk

Map 6: Kirkuk governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.\(^{617}\)

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\(^{613}\) Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, url, p. 1

\(^{614}\) IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, url

\(^{615}\) AP, Spiking violence strains sectarian ties in Iraqi province, 27 March 2023, url

\(^{616}\) IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, url

\(^{617}\) UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, url
General description of governorate

Kirkuk governorate is located in north-central Iraq and shares internal borders with Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Diyala, Salah Al-Din, and Nineawa governorates. The governorate is divided into four districts: Kirkuk, Dibis (Dabes), Al-Hawija (Al-Hawiga), and Daquq. Its capital is the city of Kirkuk. The entire governorate is part of the northern Iraqi areas, whose status is disputed between the KRG and the central government.

Kirkuk governorate’s population in 2022 was estimated at 1,770,765. The multi-ethnic governorate is home to Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, and Chaldo-Assyrians. All of these groups are present in Kirkuk city.

For further information on the governorate’s ethno-religious composition as well as its economy, please refer to section 2.5.1 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

Armed actors’ presence and control

For information on the governorate’s conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to sections 2.5.2 and 2.5.3 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

Since 2017, the Joint Operations Command (JOC)’s Forward Command Kirkuk has been headquartered in premises in Kirkuk city that were previously used as the Kirkuk main office of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)’s leadership. The Kirkuk JOC encompasses the Iraqi Army, the PMF, the Iraqi federal police, and the local police. A decision by Prime Minister Al-Sudani to transfer the headquarters back to the KRG forces was suspended after protesters took to the streets and deadly clashes erupted in September 2023. Meanwhile, the Iraqi government’s agenda also included the transfer of the internal security file for Kirkuk city and Al-Hawija (Al-Hawiga) district from the army to the federal police. Thus, in the area stretching from Daquq district up to Rashad subdistrict of Al-Hawija (Al-Hawiga) district, the checkpoints of the 18th and 20th Brigades of the 5th Division of the federal police were handed...

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618 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Kirkuk Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, url
619 UNHCR Iraq, Iraq: Kurdistan Region and Northern Governorates [Map], 22 January 2023, url; Hussein, H.A., Iraq’s Disputed Territories and the Potential Impact of the Upcoming Provincial Elections, TWI, 12 December 2023, url
620 Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 آلّاب الثاني [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, url, p. 8
621 New Arab (The), What is driving ethnic tensions in Iraq’s Kirkuk?, 13 September 2023, url; CFRI, The Turkmens in Iraq: Fragmentation dynamics, ethnic contact lines and sectarian fractures, 21 July 2023, url
623 Rudaw, Troops to withdraw from Kirkuk neighborhood at Iraqi PM’s orders: Lawmaker, 3 January 2024, url
624 USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, url, p. 19
625 KirkukNow, It’s PM’s decision to take back all our headquarters in Kirkuk, KDP, 28 August 2023, url
626 KirkukNow, Kirkuk police ready to take over security in town, locals seek fair treatment, 7 February 2023, url
627 Madwar, S., A war over the city: Exploring Kirkuk’s multi-layered conflict, Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, 10 September 2023, url
628 Kurdistan24, Kirkuk security dossier to be handled by Iraqi federal police, says minister, 25 January 2024, url
over to the Iraqi Army’s 11th Division. As of March 2024, the 11th Division was setting up its new headquarters in Rashad.

The PMF factions in the governorate included the PMF Brigades 16 (Quwat al-Turkmen) and 52, both of which were composed of Shiite Turkmen, and the Sunnite Brigade 61. There was also a presence of Asa’ib Ahl Al-Haq (AAH) militias. The 16th Brigade, the PMF’s East Dijlah faction and the newly-formed 500-strong Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis force were all reported to be present at Kirkuk airport.

ISIL maintained its presence in Kirkuk through small, decentralised cells, strongholds and hideouts. The governorate (including its Wadi Al-Shay region) remained one of the group’s key areas of operation in Iraq. The group’s supply lines ran through areas of Kirkuk that were difficult to access and patrol for the security forces due to mountainous terrain. The group retained its ability to move freely and operate in and around the disputed areas. ISIL used security gaps along the Iraqi Kurdistan border to conduct attacks and supply its cells in mountain and desert zones.

Recent security trends

While the overall situation in Kirkuk governorate has been characterised by a ‘security vacuum’ due to a limited presence of Iraqi federal forces since the withdrawal of Kurdish Peshmerga in 2017, the situation in the city of Kirkuk was reported to have remained

629 KirkukNow, Kirkuk police ready to take over security in town, locals seek fair treatment, 7 February 2023, url
630 EPIC, ISHM: March 14 – 21, 2024, 21 March 2024, url
631 KirkukNow, They Are in Control, 23 February 2022, url; INA, Security operation launched in Kirkuk: PMF, 3 December 2023, url
632 TWI, Infighting Between Northern Hashd Units Requires IRGC-QF Mediation, 6 July 2023, url
633 KirkukNow, They Are in Control, 23 February 2022, url
634 WKI, Kirkuk Minute April 6, 2023, 6 April 2023, url
635 Rudaw, Shiite militias, supporters block main Kirkuk-Erbil highway, 29 August 2023, url
636 EPIC, ISHM: May 18 – 25, 2023, 25 May 2023, url
637 Ekurd Daily, Iran’s Grip on Kirkuk, 4 March 2023, url
638 UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, url, para. 32
639 UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, url, para. 49
640 Shafaq News, Kurdish Peshmerga commander reveals ISIS’s hidden movement in Iraq’s border areas, 13 October 2023, url
641 UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, url, para. 49
643 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, February 22, 2023, 24 February 2024, url; ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, url
644 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, url
645 Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen ambtsbericht Irak [Country report Iraq], November 2023, url, p. 16
646 UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, url, para. 32
647 Hussein, H.A., Iraq’s Disputed Territories and the Potential Impact of the Upcoming Provincial Elections, TWI, 12 December 2023, url
‘generally stable’ until summer 2023. The early months of the reference period, however, saw rising tensions between Kurdish, Arab, and Turkmen communities.

On 28 August 2023, Turkmen and Arab demonstrators staged a sit-in protest outside the JOC headquarters in Kirkuk city and blocked the main road leading from Kirkuk to Erbil. Kurdish sources claimed that PMF, including individuals linked to AAH, were involved in these protests. The situation reportedly escalated when Kurdish counter-protesters arrived and security forces were deployed to the area. According to witnesses interviewed by Human Rights Watch, at least four individuals were killed (all of them ethnic Kurds) and another 16 were injured when security forces opened fire on protesters on 2 September 2023.

Meanwhile, ISIL sustained a ‘low-grade insurgency’ in the disputed areas and Kirkuk was one of the governorates that saw a concentration of ISIL operations. The group’s attacks were asymmetrical in nature, as it conducted most operations using light weaponry and explosives (simple IEDs, targeted assassinations, small-arms ambushes). According to the Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI), the group was intensifying its operations in the governorate. The Wadi Al-Shay area in Daquq was among ISIL’s key zones of operation due to ‘perceived gaps’ in the presence of Iraqi and KRG forces. Attacks attributed to ISIL targeted members and facilities of the ISF (including police) as well as the PMF and were reported in Daquq, Dibis, and Al-Hawija (Al-Hawiga) districts and

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648 Madwar, S., A war over the city: Exploring Kirkuk’s multi-layered conflict, Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, 10 September 2023, url
649 HRW, Iraq: Security Forces Open Fire on Kirkuk Protesters, 8 September 2023, url
650 Al Jazeera, Kirkuk curfew lifted after deadly unrest at rival protests by Arabs, Kurds, 2 September 2023, url
651 HRW, Iraq: Security Forces Open Fire on Kirkuk Protesters, 8 September 2023, url
652 Rudaw, Shiite militias, supporters block main Kirkuk-Erbil highway, 29 August 2023, url
653 Rudaw, People of Kirkuk have coexisted for thousands of years: Military commander, 5 September 2023, url;
654 EPIC, ISHM: August 31 – September 7, 2023, 7 September 2023, url
655 HRW, Iraq: Security Forces Open Fire on Kirkuk Protesters, 8 September 2023, url
656 ISW and CTP, Salafi Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, url
657 UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 November 2023, p. 16
658 UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, url; para. 19
659 UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, url, para. 49
660 USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, January 1, 2023 – March 31, 2023, 2 May 2023, url, p. 10
661 WKI, Kirkuk Minute | March 14, 2024, 14 March 2024, url
662 UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, url, para. 49
663 EPIC, ISHM: December 7 – 14, 2023, 14 December 2023, url; EPIC, ISHM: June 8 – 15, 2023, 15 June 2023, url
664 Rudaw, Police officer killed by unidentified assailants in Kirkuk, 28 December 2023, url; EPIC, ISHM: December 14 – 28, 2023, 28 December 2023, url
665 EPIC, ISHM: December 7 – 14, 2023, 14 December 2023, url; EPIC, ISHM: March 30 – April 6, 2023, 6 April 2023, url
666 EPIC, ISHM: December 7 – 14, 2023, 14 December 2023, url
667 EPIC, ISHM: June 8 – 15, 2023, 15 June 2023, url; EPIC, ISHM: March 30 – April 6, 2023, 6 April 2023, url
668 WKI, Kirkuk Minute April 6, 2023, 6 April 2023, url
Kirkuk city. ISIL operations also caused several civilian casualties in Kirkuk city and Rashad subdistrict, as did attacks by unidentified gunmen whose victims included the son of a police chief (south of Kirkuk city), the brother of a police colonel (Kirkuk city) and two off-duty Iraqi Army soldiers (Daquq district). An unidentified armed group also opened fire at the home of a local Mukhtar in the same district.

In response to ISIL activity, the ISF continued to carry out anti-terrorism operations, including airstrikes on ISIL hideouts in Dibis district, Wadi Zghaytoun (southern Kirkuk), and Wadi Al-Shay (where ISIL Iraq branch leaders were reported to be present) as well as ground raids in the same areas. Besides coordinating operations with security authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan, in early 2024, the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) for the first time since October 2017, conducted a joint operation with Kurdish Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) forces.

Apart from these developments, US forces conducted at least one airstrike on an Iran-backed militia of unclear affiliation (in December 2023). Moreover, two PMF factions (the 16th Brigade and the East Dijlah faction) clashed near Kirkuk airport.

**Security incidents**

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 96 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Kirkuk governorate, of which 29 were coded as battles, 47 explosions/remote violence, and 20 incidents of violence against civilians. Security incidents were recorded in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in Daquq and Kirkuk districts (see Figure 18). According to ACLED data, ISF and affiliated armed groups and ISIL were involved in the majority of events coded as battles and

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669 Rudaw, Police officer killed by unidentified assailants in Kirkuk, 28 December 2023, [url]; EPIC, ISHM: December 14 – 28, 2023, 28 December 2023, [url]
671 NINA, Assassination of the son of Suleiman Beg Police Chief, south of Kirkuk, 12 March 2024, [url]
672 EPIC, ISHM: ISHM: February 29 – March 7, 2024, 7 March 2024, [url]
673 EPIC, ISHM: March 21 – 28, 2024, 28 March 2024, [url]
674 EPIC, ISHM: March 7 – 14, 2024, 14 March 2024, [url]
676 Rudaw, Four alleged ISIS militants arrested in Iraq, 4 September 2023, [url]
677 EPIC, ISHM: September 14 – 21, 2023, 21 September 2023, [url]
680 Shafaq News, Three ISIS terrorists killed in clashes with CTS in Kirkuk, 14 November 2023, [url]; Diyaruna, ISIS remnants on back foot in former northern Iraq stronghold, 11 July 2023, [url]; Shafaq News, Iraq’s CTS Kills Five ISIS Members in Kirkuk, 7 July 2023, [url]
681 Diyaruna, ISIS remnants on back foot in former northern Iraq stronghold, 11 July 2023, [url]
682 KirkukNow, First since October 2017, Kurdish commando force in joint security operation south of Kirkuk, 8 January 2024, [url]
683 Al-Kaabi, A., Overlap Between the Islamic Resistance in Iraq and the Popular Mobilization Forces, TWI, 12 December 2023, [url]
684 EPIC, ISHM: May 18 – 25, 2023, 25 May 2023, [url]
685 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url]
explosions/remote violence, while unidentified armed groups were mainly involved in incidents coded as violence against civilians.

![Figure 1. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Kirkuk governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.](image_url)

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 19 events leading to fatalities in Kirkuk governorate. For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Kirkuk governorate.

**Civilian casualties**

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 8 civilian casualties in Kirkuk governorate. For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Kirkuk governorate.

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686 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](http://acleddata.com).
687 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024.
688 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024.
689 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024.
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**Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war**

No information on new conflict-related infrastructure damage in the reference period could be found within the time constraints of this report. As of the end of 2022, the Mine Action Review did not report any cluster munition-contaminated areas in Kirkuk governorate. A likely war remnant was reported to have killed a civilian in the Al-Faylaq area north of Kirkuk city while explosive remnants of war also killed or injured civilians in the vicinity of the town of Al-Bashir, in the Bor Mountain area.

**Conflict-induced displacement and return**

No information could be found on new conflict-induced displacements occurring in Kirkuk during the reference period. However, there were attempts by the Iraqi army to evict Kurdish residents of Topzawa village and Kirkuk city’s Newroz neighbourhood. IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) statistics as of December 2023 estimate the number of IDPs originating from Kirkuk to be 72,638.

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

691 Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, url, p. 61

692 NINA, A civilian died in the explosion of war remnants north of Kirkuk, 15 November 2023, url

693 EPIC, ISHM: March 21 – 28, 2024, 28 March 2024, url

694 EPIC, ISHM: March 7 – 14, 2024, 14 March 2024, url

695 WKI, Kirkuk Minute January 4, 2024, 4 January 2024, url; Rudaw, Troops to withdraw from Kirkuk neighborhood at Iraqi PM’s orders: Lawmaker, 3 January 2024, url

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

697 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, url
No new information could be found on returns occurring in Kirkuk during the reference period. As of December 2023, 191 922 individuals have returned to Kirkuk. The vast majority of returnees were recorded in Al-Hawija (Al-Hawiga) district.

2.6. Ninewa

![Map 7: Ninewa governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.](image)

**General description of governorate**

Ninewa (or Nineveh) governorate is located in northern Iraq. It shares internal borders with the KRI governorates of Erbil and Dohuk, as well as Anbar and Salah al-Din governorates. To its west, Ninewa shares an international border with Syria. The governorate comprises the following districts: Mosul (Al-Mosul), Tel Afar (Telafar), Al-Hamdaniya, Al-Shikhan, Akre (Aqra), Tel Kayf (Tilkaef), Al-Hatra, Sinjar, and Al-Ba’aj (Al-Baaj). Its capital is the city of Mosul.

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698 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, [url](#).
699 UN JAU, Iraq District Map, January 2014, [url](#).
700 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Ninewa Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#).
701 Balanche, F., Iraq and Syria: Kurdish Autonomous Regions Under Threat, Groupe d’Etudes Géopolitiques, 4 March 2023, [url](#).
702 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Ninewa Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#).
703 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Ninewa Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url](#).
Several of the governorate’s territories belong to the northern Iraqi areas whose status is disputed between the KRG and the central government, one of them being Sinjar district.

Ninewa governorate’s population in 2022 was estimated at 4,133,536. The governorate is home to a variety of ethnic and religious groups, including Kurds, Sunni Arabs, Turkmen, Christians, and Yazidis.

For further information on the governorate’s ethno-religious composition as well as its economy, please refer to section 2.6.1 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

**Armed actors’ presence and control**

For information on the governorate’s conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, including ISF, please refer to sections 2.6.2 and 2.6.3 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

Ninewa governorate has a significant Iraqi military presence. The Ninewa Operations Command and the West Ninewa Operations Command are both headquartered in Mosul providing operational control of the ISF at the governorate level.

Iraqi Army divisions operating in the governorate included the 16th Division under the Ninewa Operations Command and the newly formed 21st Division. The West Ninewa Operations Command included the infantry Brigades 15 and 20, the 6th Command of the Border Guards, as well as PMF units. A number of military units and checkpoints have recently been set up along the strategic Al-Tharthar line between Salah Al-Din and Al-Hatra. PMF brigades operating in Ninewa governorate included Brigades 33, 44 (Liwa Ansar Al-Marjaiya, based in Al-Hatra), and 57.

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704 UNHCR Iraq, Iraq: Kurdistan Region and Northern Governorates [Map], 22 January 2023, url
705 HRW, Iraq: Political Infighting Blocking Reconstruction of Sinjar, 6 June 2023, url
706 Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023، الباب الثاني، p. 8
707 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, February 1, 2023, 1 February 2023, url
708 USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, url, p. 19
710 Shafaq News, Iraq: Nineveh, 7 April 2023, url
711 INA, A joint force launch a large-scale security operation in western Nineveh, 7 April 2023, url
712 INA, Iraq: Nineveh, 1 April 2021, url
713 INA, The Commander-in-Chief agrees to form the 21st Division in Salah al-Din, 24 February 2023, url
714 Shafaq News, Nineveh: PMF arrest member linked to ISIS’s ‘army of Al-Asrah’, 5 January 2024, url
715 Shafaq News, Iraqi Security Forces Carry Out an Inspection Operation in a Critical Territory, 5 August 2023, url
716 INA, Al-Sudani gives directions during a visit to military units, 12 February 2024, url
717 INA, A joint force launch a large-scale security operation in western Nineveh, 7 April 2023, url
718 INA, PM: An end is deserved to the existence of the international coalition in Iraq, 12 February 2024, url
719 EPIC, ISHM: May 4 – 11, 2023, 11 May 2023, url
Multiple security actors were present in the Ninewa Plains, including the 30th PMF Brigade (Hashd Al-Shabak), which controlled the town of Bartella, and the Iran-backed 50th PMF Brigade (Kata’ib Babiliyoun, KB). The Ninewa Plains Protection Units (NPU), a 500-strong local Christian regiment that receives orders from the Ninewa Operations Command and is part of the PMF umbrella, controlled the Christian town of Qaraqosh. In March 2023, local residents repelled an attempt by KB to seize the command of an NPU base in Al-Hamdaniya. Turkish forces were also present in this region.

Sinjar district was characterised by a multitude of armed groups. These included PKK-linked groups and PMF units such as the 30th Brigade, the Yazidi-composed 80th Brigade (many of whose fighters are from the pro-PKK militia Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS)), and the Badr- and KH-backed 53rd Brigade (Kata’ib Imam Hussein, also present in Tel Afar (Telafar)). While there were also other armed actors including local and federal police, the Iraqi Army, local Asayish and local and KRG Peshmerga, security in most areas of Sinjar was handled by the PMF and smaller local militias established by the PMF, with the YBS made the foremost of its junior partners, as assessed by International Crisis Group. The district saw further recruitment efforts by PMF forces during the reference period.

ISIL maintained small, decentralised cells in the governorate and had supply lines running from Ninewa into Salah Al-Din, Kirkuk, and Diyala. The governorate’s particularities, including its large size, permitted militants to move relatively inconspicuously. The group had strongholds and hideouts in the disputed areas used security gaps along the Iraqi Kurdistan border to enable attacks and supply its cells in mountain and desert areas. The

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720 Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, ‘They Are in Control’: The rise of paramilitary forces and the security of minorities in Iraq’s disputed territories, January 2022, url, p. 17
721 ISW and CTP, Iran Update, December 1, 2023, 1 December 2023, url
722 Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, ‘They Are in Control’: The rise of paramilitary forces and the security of minorities in Iraq’s disputed territories, January 2022, url, p. 19
723 Beth-Addai, Y., Nineveh Plains Christians Defend Against the Babiliyoun Militia, TWI, 16 March 2023, url
724 Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, ‘They Are in Control’: The rise of paramilitary forces and the security of minorities in Iraq’s disputed territories, January 2022, url, p. 17
725 Beth-Addai, Y., Nineveh Plains Christians Defend Against the Babiliyoun Militia, TWI, 16 March 2023, url
726 Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, ‘They Are in Control’: The rise of paramilitary forces and the security of minorities in Iraq’s disputed territories, January 2022, url, p. 22
727 Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, ‘They Are in Control’: The rise of paramilitary forces and the security of minorities in Iraq’s disputed territories, January 2022, url, p. 25
728 Malik, H., et al., Profile: Ahrar Sinjar, TWI, 8 June 2022, url
729 KirkukNow, Shingal (Sinjar): Seven people killed in three days, 3 March 2023, url
730 Malik, H., et al., Profile: Ahrar Sinjar, TWI, 8 June 2022, url
731 KirkukNow, Shingal (Sinjar): Seven people killed in three days, 3 March 2023, url
732 International Crisis Group, Iraq: Stabilising the Contested District of Sinjar, 31 May 2022, url, p. 7
733 KirkukNow, Shingal: PMF recruits locals for new brigade, 11 April 2023, url
734 UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, url, para. 49
735 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, url
736 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, February 1, 2023, 1 February 2023, url
737 Shafaq News, Kurdish Peshmerga commander reveals ISIS’s hidden movement in Iraq’s border areas, 13 October 2023, url
738 UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, url, para. 32
Recent security trends

ISIL sustained a ‘low-grade insurgency’ in the disputed areas and Ninewa was one of the governorates that saw a concentration of ISIL operations, although the group has reduced its attacks in the governorate. During the reference period, activities attributed to ISIL included the killing of an abducted soldier in Gwer subdistrict and the planting of IEDs striking civilians in Mosul and Sinjar. In response to ISIL activity, the ISF continued to carry out anti-terrorism operations, including jointly with Peshmerga forces. Such operations were reported in Mosul city, the Shanaf region (Al-Hamdaniyah district), in Al-Hatra district, in the Qara Chokh mountains south of Mosul, and on the strategic road leading towards the governorate’s west.

A number of targeted attacks with casualties were reported to have been carried out by unidentified perpetrators against civilians in Sinjar and Tel Afar (Telafar) districts and multiple targets in the Mosul area, including civilians, a local mukhtar, and a member of the Tribal Mobilization Forces. Family disputes were believed to have been behind the killing of two young shepherds in Sinjar district in February 2023 and a deadly shooting in a local government building in Akre (Aqra) district in February 2024.

739 UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url], para. 52
740 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, [url]
741 UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url], para. 49
742 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, February 1, 2023, 1 February 2023, [url]
743 EPIC, ISHM: April 27 – May 4, 2023, 4 May 2023, [url]
744 NINA, A civilian injured by the explosion of a device left behind by ISIS terrorists in the right side of Mosul, 25 February 2024, [url]
745 NINA, A shepherd killed and another one wounded when an explosive device left by ISIS exploded west of Mosul, 9 May 2023, [url]
747 Kurdistan24, Peshmerga, Iraqi forces conduct joint operation in Nineveh, 4 May 2023, [url]
748 EPIC, ISHM: March 16 – 30, 2023, 30 March 2023, [url]
749 EPIC, ISHM: May 11 – 18, 2023, 18 May 2023, [url]
751 EPIC, ISHM: May 4 – 11, 2023, 11 May 2023, [url]
752 Diyaruna, ISIS remnants on back foot in former northern Iraq stronghold, 11 July 2023, [url]
753 INA, A joint force launch a large-scale security operation in western Nineveh, 7 April 2023, [url]
754 KirkukNow, Sinjar: Four people killed in 10 days for “unknown motives”, 6 November 2023, [url]; EPIC, ISHM: March 16 – 30, 2023, 30 March 2023, [url]
755 NINA, A Civilian Killed In An Armed Attack West Of Mosul, 18 October 2023; NINA, The body of a fifty-year-old civilian found in Tal Afar district, west of Mosul, 16 October 2023
756 NINA, Two civilians seriously injured by unidentified gunmen’s bullets northwest of Mosul, 17 January 2024; NINA, A civilian was seriously injured by unidentified gunmen’s bullets south of Mosul, 15 November 2023
757 EPIC, ISHM: November 16 – 30, 2023, 30 November 2023, [url]
758 EPIC, ISHM: December 28, 2023 – January 4, 2024, 4 January 2024, [url]
759 KirkukNow, Shingal (Sinjar): Seven people killed in three days, 3 March 2023, [url]
760 Shafaq News, Woman shoots a man in a government building in Duhok after a family dispute, 26 February 2024, [url]
According to a representative of the human rights organisation Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT) quoted by the Rudaw news website, Turkish forces conducted 36 attacks in Ninewa in 2023. Turkish airstrikes resulted in the deaths of several rural residents in Akre (Aqra), while a number of individuals died in Turkish air/drone operations targeting Kurdish Asayish and PKK-linked groups in Sinjar, including the 80th PMF Brigade and YBS.

**Security incidents**

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 271 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Ninewa governorate, of which 27 were coded as battles, 210 explosions/remote violence, and 34 incidents of violence against civilians. Security incidents were recorded in all governorate districts, with the highest number (over 50% of the total number of security incidents recorded) being documented in Aqra district (see Figure 20). According to ACLED data, Turkish forces and PKK were involved in the majority of events coded as battles and explosions/remote violence, while unidentified armed groups were mainly involved in incidents coded as violence against civilians.

![Figure 20. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Ninewa governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.](url)

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761 Rudaw, Turkey attacked Kurdistan Region, Iraq over 1,500 times in 2023: Monitor, 21 February 2024, [url]
762 Rudaw, Turkish warplane kills two villagers in Duhok: Sources, 20 February 2024, [url]; Shafaq News, One person killed in Turkish bombing east of Duhok, 20 February 2024, [url]
763 KirkukNow, Shingal (Sinjar): Seven people killed in three days, 3 March 2023, [url]
764 Reuters, Turkish drone kills three YBS fighters in Iraq - Kurdish authorities, 23 May 2023, [url]; KirkukNow, Shingal (Sinjar): Seven people killed in three days, 3 March 2023, [url]; International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., [url]
765 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url]
766 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url]
For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 18 events leading to fatalities in Ninewa governorate.  

**Civilian casualties**

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 33 civilian casualties in Ninewa governorate.  

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 2 civilian deaths in Ninewa governorate.

![Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI in Ninewa governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.](image)

**Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war**

No information on new conflict-related infrastructure damage occurring in the reference period could be found within the time constraints of this report. Recovery and reconstruction efforts have started in Ninewa, but SIPRI noted that there was ‘still a long way to go’. The Norwegian Refugee Council reported in May 2022 that there was still ‘widespread destruction of civilian houses’ in the town of Sinjar. As of the end of 2022, the Mine Action Review estimated that 21 224 square metres of the governorate’s area were still cluster munition-
contaminated.\textsuperscript{773} Several civilians were injured in explosions of old IEDs, including in west Mosul,\textsuperscript{774} Al-Hatra,\textsuperscript{775} and Tel Afar (Telafar) districts.\textsuperscript{776}

**Conflict-induced displacement and return**

No information could be found on new conflict-induced displacements occurring in Ninewa during the reference period. However, several thousand people were displaced from Sinjar and its surroundings in early May 2022 following fighting between the Iraqi Army and YBS, a PKK-linked predominantly Yazidi militia group,\textsuperscript{777} IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)\textsuperscript{778} statistics as of December 2023 estimate the number of IDPs originating from Ninewa to be 627,719, the highest among all governorates.\textsuperscript{779}

As of December 2023, 1,960,734 individuals have returned to Ninewa. The majority of returnees were recorded in Mosul (Al-Mosul) district.\textsuperscript{780} The reference period saw some villages in the Hassan Sham area being reopened for returnees.\textsuperscript{781} Authorities in Dohuk governorate recorded some 4,000 IDP returns from Dohuk to Sinjar between January and early August 2023,\textsuperscript{782} explaining that declining international humanitarian assistance had led to a deterioration of the situation of IDPs in camps in Dohuk.\textsuperscript{783} Between late September 2023 and January 2024, 4,382 IDPs returned from areas of Dohuk and Ninewa governorates to Ninewa’s Ba‘aj and Sinjar districts, as reported by the UN Secretary-General.\textsuperscript{784} At the same time, stakeholders interviewed by Human Rights Watch cited the volatile security situation, a lack of state compensation for destroyed homes and businesses, and a dearth of adequate public services as obstacles to returns to Sinjar.\textsuperscript{785}

\textsuperscript{773} Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, \url, p. 61
\textsuperscript{774} EPIC, ISHM: February 2 – 9, 2023, 9 February 2023, \url; NINA, A child killed when an explosive device left by ISIS exploded in west Mosul, 28 October 2023
\textsuperscript{775} EPIC, ISHM: April 6 – 13, 2023, 13 April 2023, \url; EPIC, ISHM: March 30 – April 6, 2023, 6 April 2023, \url
\textsuperscript{776} EPIC, ISHM: April 27 – May 4, 2023, 4 May 2023, \url
\textsuperscript{777} Al Jazeera, Estimated 3,000 people flee armed clashes in northern Iraq, 2 May 2022, \url
\textsuperscript{778} Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, \url, p. 1
\textsuperscript{779} IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, \url
\textsuperscript{780} IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, \url
\textsuperscript{781} UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, \url, para. 70
\textsuperscript{782} EPIC, ISHM: July 27 – August 10, 2023, 10 August 2023, \url
\textsuperscript{783} Shafaq News, 600 displaced families in Duhok seek return amid aid reduction, 21 May 2023, \url
\textsuperscript{784} UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, \url, para. 70
\textsuperscript{785} HRW, Iraq: Political Infighting Blocking Reconstruction of Sinjar, 6 June 2023, \url
2.7. Salah Al-Din

Map 8: Salah Al-Din governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.786

General description of governorate

Salah Al-Din (Salah Ad-Din, Saladin, Salahaddin, Salahuddin) governorate is located in north-central Iraq and shares internal borders with Baghdad, Diyala, Sulaymaniyyah, Kirkuk, Erbil, Anbar, and Ninewa governorates. Its capital is Tikrit.787 The governorate comprises the following districts: Tikrit, Al-Shirqat, Baiji (Beygee), Samarra, Balad, Al-Daur, Tooz Khurmato, Thethar, and Fares.788 The status of Tooz Khurmato district is disputed between the KRG and the central government.789

The governorate’s population in 2022 was estimated at 1,767,837.790 The governorate is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arabs,791 although it also comprises Shia Arab, Kurdish, and

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786 UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, url
787 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Salah Al-Din Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, url
789 UNHCR Iraq, Iraq: Kurdistan Region and Northern Governorates [Map], 22 January 2023, url
790 Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الاحصائية 2022-2023 [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, url, p. 8
Shia Turkmen communities, with Shiites constituting the majority in the towns of Balad and Dujail.

For further information on the governorate’s ethno-religious composition, please refer to section 2.7.1 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

**Armed actors’ presence and control**

For information on the governorate’s conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to sections 2.7.2 and 2.7.3 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

Salah Al-Din governorate, like Ninewa and Anbar, is under the control of the Iraqi Army. The Salah Al-Din Operations Command is headquartered in Tikrit, while the city of Samarra hosts the headquarters of the Samarra Operations Command. Each of these commands had its own security sectors within the governorate (e.g., Wadi Al-Tharthar falls under the Salah Al-Din Operations Command while the Samarra area is under the Samarra Operations Command). In February 2023, Prime Minister Al-Sudani established the new 21st Division of the Iraqi Army, which was to be deployed in Salah Al-Din. As of February 2024, the 1st Regiment of the 21st Division’s 91st Brigade was stationed on the strategic Wadi Al-Tharthar line stretching from the Salah Al-Din desert into Al-Hatra in Ninewa. A number of military units and checkpoints have been set up along this line, which used to be known as a ‘safe corridor’ for insurgent infiltration.

PMF units operating in the governorate included forces of the Kirkuk and East Tigris Operations Command, including PMF’s 9th, 22nd, and 88th Brigades. Special forces of the Sadr-affiliated Saraya Al-Salam militia’s 313th Brigade (part of the Samarra Operations Command) were involved in anti-ISIS activity. KH and the ISF’s CTS forces were both present at Camp Speicher, a strategic outpost in the vicinity of Tikrit. In September 2023, the Ministry of Interior announced the imminent complete transfer of Salah Al-Din’s security...

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794 New Arab (The), Transfer of security responsibilities from Iraq’s army to local police stalled by challenges, 18 September 2023, url
795 USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, url, p. 19
796 Shafaq News, Military surprise operation eliminates “terrorist cell” in Saladin, 12 November 2023, url
798 INA, The Commander-in-Chief agrees to form the 21st Division in Salah al-Din, 24 February 2023, url
799 INA, PM: An end is deserved to the existence of the international coalition in Iraq, 12 February 2024, url
800 QNA, Iraqi Forces Launch Security Operation in Salah Al-Din to Pursue ISIS Members, 15 January 2024, url; Asharq Al-Awsat, Iraq Announces Arrest of ISIS Leader, 26 September 2023, url
801 Shafaq News, PMF “neutralize” ISIS gathering in Saladin, 24 September 2023, url; Iraqi News, PMF launches large security operation in Salah Al-Din, 10 April 2023, url
802 Rudaw, Suspected clashes between rival Shiite factions erupt in Basra, 1 September 2022, url
803 Shafaq News, Saraya Al-Salam Brigades capture ISIS operative in Saladin, 31 December 2023, url
804 Al-Kaabi, A. and Knights, M., Kataib Hezbollah’s Escalating Feud with the Iraqi Security Forces, TWI, 19 May 2023, url
file from the army to the local police, although it remained unclear whether this also implied a withdrawal of PMF factions.  

ISIL maintained its presence in Salah Al-Din where it operated in small, decentralised cells. The group’s supply lines ran through mountainous areas of Salah Al-Din that were difficult to access and patrol for the security forces. The group retained its ability to move freely and operate in and around the disputed areas. As of mid-2023, most leaders of the Iraqi branch of ISIL were reportedly present in the Hamrin Mountains. Eastern sections of the governorate, especially the Al-Aith area, constituted ‘hotspots’ for ISIL due to their rough and extensive terrain and proximity to the unstable borders of Kirkuk and parts of Diyala. In spring 2023, ISIL set up ‘outposts’ north of Tooz Khurmato and moved unconfirmed numbers of fighters from Khanaqin (Diyala) to the Tooz Khurmato-Kifri area.

**Recent security trends**

Salah Al-Din was one of the governorates that witnessed a concentration of ISIL operations as the group sustained a ‘low-grade insurgency’ across the disputed areas. The Hamrin Mountains were among ISIL’s key zones of operation due to gaps in the presence of Iraqi and KRG forces. The group’s attacks were of an asymmetrical nature, as it conducted most of its operations through the use of light weaponry and explosives, including simple IEDs, targeted assassinations, small-arms ambushes. Attacks attributed to ISIL included a thwarted suicide attack on the PMF security directorate offices in Tikrit and further attacks on PMF.

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805 New Arab (The), Transfer of security responsibilities from Iraq’s army to local police stalled by challenges, 18 September 2023, [url]
806 UNSG, Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, S/2023/568, 31 July 2023, [url], para. 32
807 UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url], para. 49
808 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, [url]
809 Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen ambtsbericht Irak [Country report Iraq], November 2023, [url], p. 16
811 Shafaq News, PMF "neutralize" ISIS gathering in Saladin, 24 September 2023, [url]
812 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, [url]
814 ISW and CTP, Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, April 5, 2023, 7 April 2023, [url]
815 UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url], para. 49
816 UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url], para. 19
817 UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee, S/2024/92, 29 January 2024, [url], para. 49
818 USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, January 1 – March 31, 2023, 2 May 2023, [url], p. 10
Iraqi Army soldiers\[^{821}\] and federal police\[^{822}\] in various areas of the governorate, including the Jazeera sector,\[^{823}\] the Al-Zarga area (eastern Salah Al-Din),\[^{824}\] and the Al-Qadiriyyah area north of Samarra.\[^{825}\] Moreover, ISIL kidnapped several animal herders,\[^{826}\] including in the Tooz Khurmato district,\[^{827}\] killing at least one abductee.\[^{828}\]

In response to ISIL activity, the ISF continued to carry out anti-terrorism operations,\[^{829}\] including airstrikes on ISIL hideouts in Tooz Khurmato district,\[^{830}\] in the Salah Al-Din – Kirkuk border zone\[^{831}\] and in the Al-Aith area.\[^{832}\] The ISF also conducted a number of anti-ISIL ground security operations, including in the Wadi Al-Tharthar region\[^{833}\] and in the Al-Aith Island area.\[^{834}\]

Further instances of armed clashes were reported between KH fighters and members of the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) at Camp Speicher in March 2023\[^{835}\] and in a tribal conflict that broke out in Dujail in southern Salah Al-Din in May 2023 and left three people dead, including a police colonel a PMF member, and two civilians injured.\[^{836}\]

**Security incidents**

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 71 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Salah Al-Din governorate, of which 29 were coded as battles, 33 explosions/remote violence, and 9 incidents of violence against civilians.\[^{837}\] Security incidents were recorded in all governorate districts, with the highest number being documented in Tikrit and Tooz Khurmato districts (see Figure 22). According to ACLED data, ISF and affiliated armed groups and ISIL were involved in the majority of events coded as battles and explosions/remote violence, while unidentified armed groups were mainly involved in incidents coded as violence against civilians.

\[^{821}\] Shafaq News, Three Iraqi soldiers killed in an ISIS in Saladin: source, 14 January 2024, [url]
\[^{823}\] Shafaq News, Three Iraqi soldiers killed in an ISIS in Saladin: source, 14 January 2024, [url]
\[^{824}\] EPIC, ISHM: January 4 – 11, 2024, 11 January 2024, [url]
\[^{825}\] EPIC, ISHM: August 24 – 31, 2023, 31 August 2023, [url]
\[^{826}\] EPIC, ISHM: January 4 – 11, 2024, 11 January 2024, [url]; EPIC, ISHM: March 9 – 16, 2023, 16 March 2023, [url]
\[^{827}\] EPIC, ISHM: January 4 – 11, 2024, 11 January 2024, [url]
\[^{828}\] EPIC, ISHM: March 9 – 16, 2023, 16 March 2023, [url]
\[^{831}\] EPIC, ISHM: September 14 – 21, 2023, 21 September 2023, [url]; Kurdistan24, Iraqi F-16 kills suspected ISIS unit in Saladin, says military, 18 September 2023, [url]
\[^{832}\] Rudaw, Iraqi warplanes kill 3 suspected ISIS militants in Salahaddin, 30 August 2023, [url]
\[^{833}\] Shafaq News, Military surprise operation eliminates "terrorist cell" in Saladin, 12 November 2023, [url]
\[^{835}\] Al-Kaabi, A. and Knights, M., Kataib Hezbollah’s Escalating Feud with the Iraqi Security Forces, TWI, 19 May 2023, [url]
\[^{836}\] EPIC, ISHM: April 27 – May 4, 2023, 4 May 2023, [url]
\[^{837}\] EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url]
Figure 22. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Salah Al-Din governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.838

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 9 events leading to fatalities in Salah Al-Din governorate.839

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 10 civilian casualties in Salah Al-Din governorate.840 For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 3 civilian deaths in Salah Al-Din governorate.841

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838 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url]
839 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
840 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
841 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

Information on new conflict-related infrastructure damage occurring in the reference period could not be found within the time constraints of this report. As of the end of 2022, the Mine Action Review did not report any cluster munition-contaminated areas in Salah Al-Din governorate. During the reference period, several people were killed or injured in explosions of old IEDs, including in Baiji (Beygee) district and in the Al-Aith region.

Conflict-induced displacement and return

No information could be found on new conflict-induced displacements occurring in Salah Al-Din during the reference period. IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) statistics as of December 2023 estimate the number of IDPs originating from Salah Al-Din to be 128,273.

As of December 2023, 760,284 individuals have returned to Salah Al-Din. The majority of returnees were recorded in Tikrit district. In November 2023, scores of displaced people from camps in Sulaymaniya and Dohuk governorates returned to their former areas of

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842 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
843 Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, url, p. 61
844 EPIC, ISHM: June 15 – 22, 2023, 22 June 2023, url
845 EPIC, ISHM: September 14 – 21, 2023, 21 September 2023, url
846 Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, url, p. 1
847 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, url
848 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, url
849 INA, 127 IDPs return to Salah-al-Din and Nineveh: MDM, 21 November 2023, url; INA, 111 IDPs return from Sulaymaniya to their homes in Salah al-Din: Jabro, 15 November 2023, url
850 INA, 127 IDPs return to Salah al-Din and Nineveh: MDM, 21 November 2023, url
residence in Yathrib in Balad district. Information on the reasons for returns could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

2.8. Dohuk

Map 9: Dohuk governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.851

General description of governorate

Dohuk (Dahuk, Duhok, Dihok) governorate is located in the far north of Iraq852 and in the north-western part of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).853 It has internal borders with the governorates of Ninewa and Erbil and shares international borders with Türkiye and Syria. The governorate comprises the following districts: Dohuk, Amedi (Al-Amadiya), Sumel (Sumail), and Zakho.854 Akre (Aqra)855 and some areas of Al-Shikhan and Semel districts,856 though officially part of Ninewa governorate, are de facto governed by the KRG as part of Dohuk governorate.857 The governorate’s capital is Dohuk city.858

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851 UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, url
852 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Dohuk Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, url
853 UNHCR Iraq, Iraq: Kurdistan Region and Northern Governors [Map], 22 January 2023, url
854 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Dohuk Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, url
855 AGO, Household Assessments and Focus Group Discussions: Akre, Kurdistan Region of Iraq – March-April 2023, 23 June 2023, url, p. 3
856 Iraq, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Population Analysis Report February 2021, 30 May 2022, url, p. 11, footnote 3
858 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Dohuk Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, url
The governorate’s population in 2022 was estimated at 1,432,369. Its residents are mainly Kurdish, but the governorate is also home to communities of Arabs, Turkmen, Chaldeans, and Assyrians.

For further information on the governorate’s ethno-religious composition as well as its economy, please refer to section 2.8.1 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

**Armed actors’ presence and control**

For information on the governorate’s conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to sections 2.8.2 and 2.8.3 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

Dohuk governorate is controlled by the KDP, to which Peshmerga and security forces are affiliated. Besides KDP Peshmerga forces, there was a continued presence of KDP-controlled Zeravani units, a militarised police force under the command of the KRG’s Ministry of Interior, and forces of the Duhok Security Directorate (Asayish).

The presence of Peshmerga forces has been reinforced in recent years to secure the border zones where fighting between Turkish forces and PKK occurs regularly. These areas have also seen an increase in the number of military bases of Iraqi border guards. The presence of the 1st Brigade of the border guards was reported in Zakho district and, since February 2024, on the Iraq-Türkiye border strip in Shiladze subdistrict (Amedy district).

Turkish forces have significantly increased their military presence in the KRI in recent years and were setting up new bases in Dohuk governorate during the reference period. Most

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859 Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023, Part Two, 21 August 2023, url, p. 8
860 AU, Life in Dohuk, n.d., url
861 Balanche, F., Iraq and Syria: Kurdish Autonomous Regions Under Threat, Groupe d’Etudes Géopolitiques, 4 March 2023, url
862 Shafaq News, Minister: Most Christians and Turkmen in KRI reside in Erbil and Duhok, 9 December 2023, url
863 Rodgers, W., Iraqi Kurdistan’s House of Cards Is Collapsing, FP, 22 March 2023, url
865 ACLED, Regional Overview Middle East – September 2023, 5 October 2023, url
866 Bakr, M.J., The War at Home - The Need for Internal Security Sector Reform in Iraqi Kurdistan, MEI, July 2021, url, pp. 9-10
867 Rudaw, KRG, PKK exchange blame for clashes at Duhok checkpoint, 25 January 2024, url
868 basnews, Security Forces Arrest Two Drug Dealers in Duhok, 21 February 2024, url
869 Rudaw, Iraqi border guards deployed to northern Duhok, 23 February 2024, url
870 Shafaq News, Death of Zeravani forces member due to electric shock near Mosul, 23 February 2024, url
871 Rudaw, PKK militants target Peshmerga forces in Duhok province, 12 August 2023, url
872 ANF, Turkish state establishes a new base in Duhok, 21 January 2024, url
873 Rudaw, Turkish state establishes a new base in Duhok, 21 January 2024, url
874 ANF, Turkish state establishes a new base in Duhok, 21 January 2024, url
875 Rudaw, Turkish state establishes a new base in Duhok, 21 January 2024, url
876 ANF, Turkish state establishes a new base in Duhok, 21 January 2024, url
877 Rudaw, Turkish state establishes a new base in Duhok, 21 January 2024, url
878 ANF, Turkish state establishes a new base in Duhok, 21 January 2024, url
879 Rudaw, Iranian-Kurdish parties with bases in northern Iraq – changed situation in autumn 2023, url
Turkish bases were located in a 150 km-long strip of Iraqi-Turkish borderland that reached 30 km deep into Iraqi territory.\(^{874}\)

The PKK’s leadership maintained a foothold in northern Iraq\(^{875}\) and the group operated bases in Dohuk governorate.\(^{876}\) With the KDP reportedly lacking the military strength to contain the PKK on its own,\(^{877}\) the governorate witnessed a concentration of Turkish operations\(^{878}\) that involved shelling of PKK positions.\(^{879}\) Its rural mountain areas have been a traditional core zone of operations of the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT).\(^{880}\) Meanwhile, ISIL maintained only a ‘very limited’ presence in the KRI.\(^{881}\)

**Recent security trends**

Turkish armed forces conducted ground and air operations against PKK targets in Dohuk throughout the reference period.\(^{882}\) According to a representative of the human rights organisation Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT) quoted by the Rudaw news website, Türkiye conducted 517 strikes in Dohuk in 2023.\(^{883}\) Turkish forces reportedly launched multiple airstrikes in the Metin and Gara mountains\(^{884}\) of Amedy district.\(^{885}\) Meanwhile, various unspecified armed groups continued to conduct attacks against security forces and foreign military bases.\(^{886}\) Following Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s re-election in late May 2023, PKK operations, including IED attacks on Turkish forces, increased in the governorate. In June 2023, the group revoked a unilateral ceasefire it had declared in February, citing continuing Turkish anti-PKK operations.\(^{887}\) The border areas of Dohuk regularly witnessed clashes,\(^{888}\) with the Metin area becoming a ‘focal point’ of fighting between Turkish forces stationed there and PKK militants\(^{889}\) who operated tunnels and caves in the mountain.\(^{890}\)

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\(^{874}\) Reuters, Turkey’s push into Iraq risks deeper conflict, 31 January 2023, [url]

\(^{875}\) AP, Turkey strikes Kurdish militants in Iraq again after warning of retaliation for a bombing in Ankara, 4 October 2023, [url]

\(^{876}\) USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, January 1, 2023 – March 31, 2023, 2 May 2023, [url], p. 32

\(^{877}\) Reuters, Turkey’s push into Iraq risks deeper conflict, 31 January 2023, [url]

\(^{878}\) ACLED, Regional Overview Middle East – June 2023, 6 July 2023, [url]

\(^{879}\) USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, January 1, 2023 – March 31, 2023, 2 May 2023, [url], p. 32

\(^{880}\) ACLED, Regional Overview Middle East – June 2023, 6 July 2023, [url]

\(^{881}\) USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, January 1, 2023 – March 31, 2023, 2 May 2023, [url], p. 32


\(^{883}\) Rudaw, Turkey attacked Kurdistan Region, Iraq over 1,500 times in 2023: Monitor, 21 January 2024, [url]

\(^{884}\) AP, Turkey launches airstrikes against Kurdish militants in Iraq and Syria after 9 soldiers were killed, 13 January 2024, [url]; Al Jazeera, Turkey says PKK targets in north Iraq destroyed after Ankara suicide attack, 2 October 2023, [url]; Rudaw, Turkey claims hitting over 30 PKK targets in Kurdistan Region, 16 September 2023, [url]; Rudaw, No casualties in ‘intense’ bombing of Duhok mountains, Turkey blamed, 3 June 2023, [url]

\(^{885}\) Rudaw, No casualties in ‘intense’ bombing of Duhok mountains, Turkey blamed, 3 June 2023, [url]

\(^{886}\) Shafaq News, CTG: Booby-Trapped Drone Targets Border Guards Headquarters in Kurdistan Region, 5 July 2023, [url]

\(^{887}\) ACLED, Regional Overview Middle East – June 2023, 6 July 2023, [url]

\(^{888}\) Kurdistan24, Two artillery shells struck village near Amedi, 21 August 2023, [url]

\(^{889}\) Shafaq News, Turkish air force strikes PKK near Duhok, 1 January 2024, [url]

\(^{890}\) Shafaq News, Turkish Warplanes Conduct Airstrikes on PKK Positions in Northern Iraq’s Kurdistan Region, 6 May 2023, [url]
In May and early June 2023, Türkiye reportedly carried out more than 50 airstrikes in the space of three weeks on PKK sites in Amedy district (Mount Metin area, Deraluk sub-district).\(^{891}\) Following a suicide attack in Ankara in early October 2023 for which the PKK claimed responsibility,\(^{892}\) these areas experienced a further surge in Turkish airstrikes\(^ {893}\) and artillery attacks.\(^{894}\) Turkish strikes escalated again in the aftermath of deadly PKK attacks on Turkish troops stationed in the KRI in December 2023 and January 2024,\(^ {895}\) and intensiﬁed clashes were reported between Turkish forces and the PKK in Shiladze and Deraluk. Civilians were caught in the crossﬁre of this conﬂict\(^{896}\) as Turkish air and drone strikes left several civilians dead or injured,\(^{897}\) including in the Shiladze,\(^ {898}\) Bamarne,\(^ {899}\) and Jumanki areas\(^ {900}\). There was also a reported assault on a Kurdish political ﬁgure by Turkish intelligence operatives.\(^ {901}\)

There were reports of PKK carrying out several attacks on Peshmerga units in Amedy district by means of rocket ﬁre,\(^ {902}\) armed assault,\(^ {903}\) and a roadside IED.\(^ {904}\) Moreover, in Zakho district, unidentified perpetrators carried out a drone attack on the 1st Brigade of the Iraqi border guards,\(^ {905}\) while a car exploded due to unknown causes, killing a former KDP security ofﬁcial.\(^ {906}\) KDP Peshmerga forces attacked PKK positions in September 2023 in what was reported as ‘a rare direct confrontation’ between the two entities.\(^ {907}\)

### Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 3,441 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Dohuk governorate, of which 622 were coded as battles, 2,816 explosions/remotely operated vehicles and 3 incidents of violence against civilians.\(^ {908}\) The vast majority of security incidents was documented in Al Amadiya district (see Figure 24).

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\(^{891}\) Shafaq News, Turkey bombs PKK sites in Duhok: +50 attacks in less than a month, 3 June 2023, [url]
\(^{892}\) Al Jazeera, Turkey says PKK targets in north Iraq destroyed after Ankara suicide attack, 2 October 2023, [url]
\(^{893}\) Al Jazeera, Turkey says PKK targets in north Iraq destroyed after Ankara suicide attack, 2 October 2023, [url], AP, Turkey strikes Kurdish militants in Iraq again after warning of retaliation for a bombing in Ankara, 4 October 2023, [url]
\(^{894}\) Shafaq News, Turkish artillery strikes on PKK targets near Duhok raise concerns, 4 October 2023, [url]
\(^{895}\) CFR, Instability in Iraq, last updated 13 February 2024, [url]
\(^{896}\) Rudaw, Iraqi border guards deployed to northern Duhok, 23 February 2024, [url]
\(^{897}\) Reuters, Two civilians killed in Turkish air strike in northern Iraq, security sources say, 8 March 2024, [url], Rudaw, Turkish drone kills off-duty Peshmerga in Duhok, 5 December 2023, [url], USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, July 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023, 9 November 2023, [url], p. 52
\(^{898}\) Rudaw, Iraqi border guards deployed to northern Duhok, 23 February 2024, [url]
\(^{899}\) Rudaw, Turkish drone kills off-duty Peshmerga in Duhok, 5 December 2023, [url]
\(^{900}\) NINA, One person killed and another one injured when a Turkish plane bombed a civilian vehicle in the Jumanki district of Dohuk, 6 August 2023, [url]
\(^{901}\) Shafaq News, Kurdish organization denounces Turkish intelligence for targeting one of its members, 19 April 2023, [url]
\(^{902}\) Rudaw, KRG, PKK exchange blame for clashes at Duhok checkpoint, 25 January 2024, [url]
\(^{903}\) Shafaq News, PKK militants attack Peshmerga unit in KRI, 12 August 2023, [url]
\(^{904}\) EPIC, ISHM: July 27 – August 10, 2023, 10 August 2023, [url]
\(^{905}\) Shafaq News, CTG: Booby-Trapped Drone Targets Border Guards Headquarters in Kurdistan Region, 5 July 2023, [url]
\(^{906}\) EPIC, ISHM: July 20 – 27, 2023, 27 July 2023, [url]
\(^{907}\) ACLED, Regional Overview Middle East – September 2023, 5 October 2023, [url]
\(^{908}\) EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url]
According to ACLED data, Turkish forces and PKK were involved in the majority of events coded as battles and explosions/remote violence.

![Bar chart showing security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Dohuk governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.](image)

**Figure 24.** Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Dohuk governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.\(^909\)

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 76 events leading to fatalities in Dohuk governorate.\(^910\)

### Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 12 civilian casualties in Dohuk governorate.\(^911\) For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 2 civilian deaths in Dohuk governorate.\(^912\)

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\(^909\) EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url]

\(^910\) EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

\(^911\) EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

\(^912\) EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

According to the pro-Kurdish Shafaq News website, there were 3,512 registered minefields in the KRI. Data from the Iraqi Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) cited by Rudaw indicated that more than 200 square kilometres of the KRI’s territory remained contaminated with landmines and remnants of war. Explosive remnants of war in the KRI comprised items planted by the former Iraqi government’s armed forces, by Iranian forces during the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988), as well as remnants of the Türkiye-PKK conflict. As of the end of 2022, the Mine Action Review stated, with reference to the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA), that the KRI had no areas registered as being contaminated by cluster munitions. The Shafaq News reported that clashes between Turkish forces and the PKK had caused several fires on agricultural lands and forests, quoting a Mount Metin villager as saying that mutual shelling prevented access to farms and livestock breeding.

Conflict-induced displacement and return

It was reported that numerous families were displaced from their homes in Dohuk governorate due to fighting between Turkish forces and the PKK, resulting in the depopulation of entire villages, as reported in the Mount Metin area in autumn 2023 and in Deraluk in early

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913 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
914 BBC News, Iraq media guide, 24 February 2023, url
915 Shafaq News, Duhok detonates 100 mines and unexploded bombs, 15 February 2023, url
916 Rudaw, Over 2,100 square km still contaminated by mines in Iraq, 23 December 2023, url
917 Shafaq News, Duhok detonates 100 mines and unexploded bombs, 15 February 2023, url
918 Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, url, p. 61
919 Shafaq News, Clashes between Turkish military, PKK ignite forest fires in Duhok, 20 September 2023, url;
Shafaq News, Turkish Air Force strikes PKK targets in northern Iraq’s Amadiyah District, 26 August 2023, url
920 Shafaq News, Turkish artillery strikes on PKK targets near Duhok raise concerns, 4 October 2023, url
921 Rudaw, Iraqi border guards deployed to northern Duhok, 23 February 2024, url
922 Shafaq News, Turkish artillery strikes on PKK targets near Duhok raise concerns, 4 October 2023, url
2024. However, IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) statistics as of December 2023 did not show any figures of IDPs originating from Dohuk.

As of 31 December 2023, IOM recorded 744 returnees in the governorate. No information could be found on new returns occurring in Duhok during the reference period.

2.9. Erbil

Map 10: Erbil governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.

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923 Rudaw, Iraqi border guards deployed to northern Duhok, 23 February 2024, [url](#)

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

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

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

927 UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, [url](#)
General description of governorate

Erbil (Arbil) governorate is located in northern Iraq\(^{928}\) and in the north-central part of the Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI).\(^{929}\) It has internal borders with the governorates of Dohuk, Sulaymaniyyah, Ninewa, Kirkuk, and Salah Al-Din and shares international borders with Türkiye and Iran. It comprises the following districts: Erbil, Al-Zibar, Rawanduz, Shaqlawa, Koysinjaq (Koysinjaq), and Makhmur.\(^{930}\) However, most of Makhmur, including its district centre, is administered by Ninewa governorate.\(^{931}\) Erbil city is both the capital of the governorate\(^{932}\) and of the KRI.\(^{933}\)

The governorate’s population in 2022 was estimated at 2 055 448.\(^{934}\) Its inhabitants are mainly Kurdish but the governorate is also home to Arabs, Turkmen and Assyrians.\(^{935}\)

For further information on the governorate’s ethno-religious composition as well as its economy, please refer to section 2.9.1 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

Armed actors’ presence and control

For information on the governorate’s conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to sections 2.9.2 and 2.9.3 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

Erbil is controlled by the KDP with which the governorate’s Peshmerga and security forces were affiliated.\(^{936}\) Erbil city housed the KRG’s Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs (MoPA)\(^{937}\) and Ministry of Interior (MoI)\(^{938}\) and the headquarters of the unofficially KDP-affiliated Directorate General of Counter Terrorism (CTD) (Kurdistan CT).\(^{939}\) US military personnel were stationed at Harir base outside Erbil city\(^{940}\) and at Erbil International Airport.\(^{941}\) Limited numbers of Iraqi border guards were deployed along the Iraq-Iran border.\(^{942}\)

Most of the Iranian Kurdish opposition parties were based in KRG-controlled areas.\(^{943}\) Following an agreement between Iraq and Iran to disarm these groups by 19 September 2023

\(^{928}\) UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Erbil Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, url
\(^{929}\) UNHCR Iraq, Iraq: Kurdistan Region and Northern Governors [Map], 22 January 2023, url
\(^{930}\) UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Erbil Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, url
\(^{931}\) IOM Iraq, Labour Market Profile – Makhmur, Erbil Governorate, April 2022, url, p. 4
\(^{932}\) UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Erbil Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, url
\(^{933}\) Iraq, Kurdistan Regional Government, Facts & Figures, n.d., url
\(^{934}\) Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, url, p. 8
\(^{935}\) EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, url
\(^{936}\) Rodgers, W., Iraqi Kurdistan’s House of Cards Is Collapsing, FP, 22 March 2023, url; Norway, Landinfo, Iran: Iransk-kurdiske partier med baser i Nord-Irak – Endret situasjon høsten 2023 [Iranian-Kurdish parties with bases in northern Iraq – changed situation in autumn 2023], 4 December 2023, url, p. 3, footnote 5
\(^{937}\) Iraq, Kurdistan Regional Government, Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs, Contact, n.d., url
\(^{938}\) Iraq, Kurdistan Regional Government, Ministry of Interior, n.d., url
\(^{939}\) Rudaw, Unidentified drone injures two people in Sulaimani province, 9 August 2023, url
\(^{940}\) EPIC, ISHM: October 19 – 26, 2023, 26 October 2023, url
\(^{941}\) ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 25, 2024, 25 January 2024, url, p. 12
\(^{942}\) EPIC, ISHM: September 14 – 21, 2023, 21 September 2023, url
\(^{943}\) Van Wilgenburg, W., Iran’s Pressure Campaign on Iranian Kurds Continues, TWI, 13 September 2023, url
and relocate them from their bases, it was reported that Iranian Kurdish groups based along the Iraq-Iran border relocated in September 2023 after vacating their camps in Erbil’s Halgurd and Berbzin mountains. According to oral sources cited by Landinfo, the PDKI (Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan) fully or largely evacuated its camps and relocated its fighters further away from the border to a camp northeast of Erbil city, although some of its members were said to have returned in October 2023. Similarly, the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK) disarmed and left its two military camps for a civilian camp located northeast of Erbil city, according to an Iranian human rights organisation quoted by Landinfo. Meanwhile, the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), based in the Qandil mountains, refused to surrender its weapons, and as of December 2023, there were no indications that it had vacated its bases, according to Landinfo.

The PKK continued to control territories in the Qandil mountains that lay outside of KRG control but withdrew from Makhmur refugee camp in October 2023. The Peshmerga and the Iraqi Army eventually agreed to split control of several bases in Makhmur that had been abandoned by the PKK. Meanwhile, ISIL only had a ‘very limited’ presence in the KRI.

Recent security trends

Throughout the reference period, Turkish forces conducted ground and air attacks against PKK targets in the governorate, including in the Hakurk and Qandil regions. According to a representative of the human rights organisation Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT) quoted by the Rudaw news website, Türkiye conducted 475 strikes in Erbil in 2023. While Turkish anti-PKK operations were focused on Dohuk in the early months of the reference period, Turkish airstrikes and artillery strikes in northern areas of Erbil governorate significantly increased in June 2023. Following Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s re-election in late May 2023, PKK operations, including IED attacks on Turkish forces, intensified in Erbil. In June 2023, the group ended a ceasefire it had declared in February.

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944 AP, Tehran and Baghdad reach a deal to disarm and relocate Iranian dissident groups based in north Iraq, 28 August 2023, [url]
945 WKI, Kurdistan’s Weekly Brief | September 26, 2023, 26 September 2023, [url]
946 Citadel (The), Disarmament deadline for Kurdish opposition Groups looms as backchannel negotiations continue, 17 September 2023, [url]
947 Norway, Landinfo, Iran: Iransk-kurdiske partier med baser i Nord-Irak – Endret situasjon høsten 2023 [Iranian-Kurdish parties with bases in northern Iraq – changed situation in autumn 2023], 4 December 2023, [url], pp. 3-4
948 Van Wilgenburg, W., Iran’s Pressure Campaign on Iranian Kurds Continues, TWI, 13 September 2023, [url]
950 Van Wilgenburg, W., Iran’s Pressure Campaign on Iranian Kurds Continues, TWI, 13 September 2023, [url]
951 Shafaq News, PKK withdraws completely from Makhmour camp, 19 October 2023, [url]
952 Rudaw, Peshmerga, Iraqi army to share control of Makhmour military posts, 4 November 2023, [url]
953 USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, January 1, 2023 – March 31, 2023, 2 May 2023, [url], p. 32
955 Al Jazeera, Turkish air strikes target northern Iraq and Syria, 16 January 2024, [url]
956 Rudaw, Turkey attacked Kurdistan Region, Iraq over 1,500 times in 2023: Monitor, 21 February 2024, [url]
957 ACLED, Regional Overview Middle East – June 2023, 6 July 2023, [url]
Turkish airstrikes reportedly also targeted the PKK in Makhmur refugee camp in October 2023, allegedly injuring several civilians. After the PKK withdrew from several military posts in Makhmur in October 2023, clashes erupted between members of the Peshmerga and the Iraqi Army, leaving four Peshmerga dead.

Starting on 18 October 2023, indirect attacks on facilities housing US forces and personnel from the international coalition against ISIL resumed after having been halted since May 2022, with multiple drone strikes targeting Harir air base and Erbil International Airport. The majority of attacks were claimed by the group Islamic Resistance in Iraq, which vowed to engage in operations in support of Hamas in Gaza.

In another escalation, in late December 2023, suspected Iran-backed militants carried out drone attacks on a key Peshmerga base in Pirmam, an area that is home to high-ranking KDP cadres. There were also targeted attacks that left at least two Iranian Kurdish activists from the PDKI dead or injured. In mid-January 2024, a ballistic missile attack claimed by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) killed four civilians and injured six others as it struck a house in Erbil city. The IRGC’s claim that the building was being used by Israeli intelligence services was rejected by the KRG.

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 1,015 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Erbil governorate, of which 45 were coded as battles, 961 explosions/remote violence, and 9 incidents of violence against civilians. The vast majority of security incidents were documented in Rawanduz district. According to ACLED data, Turkish forces and PKK were involved in the majority of events coded as battles, and explosions/remote violence.

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958 UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, para. 32
959 Rudaw, Suspected Turkish drone attack targets Makhmour camp, 7 October 2023, url
960 Rudaw, Peshmerga, Iraqi army to share control of Makhmour military posts, 4 November 2023, url
961 UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, para. 22
962 See, for example, EPIC, ISHM: December 28, 2023 – January 4, 2024, 4 January 2024, url
963 ISW and CTP, Iran Update, December 6, 2023, 6 December 2023, url
964 ISW and CTP, Iran Update, January 10, 2024, 10 January 2024, url
965 VOA, In Major Escalation, Drones Target Key Kurdish Power Base Near Irbil, 2 January 2024, url
966 Amwaj.media, Rare attack near heart of Iraqi Kurdish power holds multiple messages, 9 January 2024, url
967 Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, p. 2; Hengaw, Assassination Attempt on Kurdish Lawyer and Political Activist Sohrab Rahmati in the Kurdistan Region, 16 November 2023, url
968 HRW, Iraq: Iranian Attack Kills civilians in Erbil, 22 January 2024, url
969 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data, ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), url
Figure 26. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Erbil governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.\textsuperscript{970}

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 25 events leading to fatalities in Erbil governorate.\textsuperscript{971}

**Civilian casualties**

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 38 civilian casualties in Erbil governorate.\textsuperscript{972} For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 4 civilian deaths in Erbil governorate.\textsuperscript{973}

\textsuperscript{970} EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), url

\textsuperscript{971} EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

\textsuperscript{972} EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

\textsuperscript{973} EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI in Erbil governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

According to the pro-Kurdish Shafaq News website, there were 3512 registered minefields in the KRI. Data from the Iraqi Directorate of Mine Action cited by Rudaw indicated that more than 200 square kilometres of the KRI’s territory remained contaminated with landmines and remnants of war. Remnants of war in the KRI comprised items planted by the former Iraqi government’s armed forces, by Iranian forces during the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988), as well as remnants from the Türkiye-PKK conflict. As of the end of 2022, the Mine Action Review stated, with reference to the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA), that the KRI had no areas registered as being contaminated by cluster munitions. Old IEDs struck a civilian vehicle in the Sedikan area and killed several shepherds near Erbil city and in the mountain areas of Haji Omaran, as well as three Iraqi border guards in the Kani Qirzhala area.

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974 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
975 BBC News, Iraq media guide, 24 February 2023, [url]
976 Shafaq News, Duhok detonates 100 mines and unexploded bombs, 15 February 2023, [url]
977 Rudaw, Over 2,100 square km still contaminated by mines in Iraq, 23 December 2023, [url]
978 Shafaq News, Duhok detonates 100 mines and unexploded bombs, 15 February 2023, [url]
979 Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url], p. 61
980 EPIC, ISHM: March 30 – April 6, 2023, 6 April 2023, [url]
981 Shafaq News, Landmine Explosion in Erbil Kills Two Shepherds: Lingering Threats of ISIS Remnants, 28 March 2023, [url]
982 Rudaw, Landmine explosion kills shepherd on Kurdistan Region-Iran border, 18 June 2023, [url]
983 Rudaw, Landmine blast kills three border guards in Erbil, 10 March 2024, [url]
Conflict-induced displacement and return

No information could be found on new conflict-induced displacements occurring in Erbil during the reference period. IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)\textsuperscript{984} statistics as of December 2023 estimate the number of IDPs originating from Erbil to be 8 575 IDPs.\textsuperscript{985}

As of 31 December 2023, IOM recorded 62 766 returnees in the governorate.\textsuperscript{986} No information could be found on new returns occurring in Erbil during the reference period.

2.10. Sulaymaniyah

\textsuperscript{984} Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, url, p. 1

\textsuperscript{985} IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, url

\textsuperscript{986} IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, url

\textsuperscript{987} UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, url
General description of governorate

Sulaymaniyah (Sulaymaniyyah, Slemani) governorate is located in north-eastern Iraq and in the south-eastern part of the Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI). It has internal borders with Erbil, Kirkuk, Salah Al-Din and Diyala governorates and shares an international border with Iran to the east. The governorate is divided into the districts of Sulaymaniyah, Pshdar, Rania, Dukan (Dokan), Sharbazher, Chamchamal, Kalar, Darbandikhan (Derbendikhan), Halabja (Halabcha), and Panjwin. The governorate’s capital is the city of Sulaymaniyah.

The governorate’s population in 2022 was estimated at 2,396,206. Most of its residents are Sunni Kurds, though the governorate is also home to Shia Kurds and Chaldean Christians.

For further information on the governorate’s ethno-religious composition as well as its economy, please refer to section 2.10.1 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

Armed actors’ presence and control

For information on the governorate’s conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to sections 2.10.2 and 2.10.3 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

Sulaymaniyah is controlled by the PUK, which has its headquarters in the governorate. The PUK controlled the governorate’s Peshmerga and security forces. The Peshmerga included PUK-controlled forces under the command of the KRG’s Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs (MoPA) and the PUK’s unit 70 which consisted of 48,000 fighters as of 2021. The PUK further maintained its own police forces (nominally under the control of the KRG’s Ministry of Interior), Asayish forces and intelligence services (nominally under the Kurdistan Region Security Council). The Counter-Terrorism Group (CTG), a PUK-dominated US-partnered

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988 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Al-Sulaymaniyyah Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url]
989 UNHCR Iraq, Iraq: Kurdistan Region and Northern Governorates [Map], 22 January 2023, [url]
990 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Al-Sulaymaniyyah Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url]; UN IAU, Sulaymaniyyah Governorate Profile [Map], November 2010, [url], p. 1
991 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Al-Sulaymaniyyah Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url]
992 Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url], p. 8
993 EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url]
995 Aydoğan, B., Iraqi Kurds Face Legitimacy Issues Amid Election Deadlock and Internal Division, TWI, 7 August 2023, [url]
997 Bakr, M.J., The War at Home: The Need for Internal Security Sector Reform in Iraqi Kurdistan, MEI, July 2021, [url], p. 8
999 USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve – Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress, April 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023, 3 August 2023, [url], p. 55
1000 Jamestown Foundation (The), US-Backed Proxy Strengthens Iranian Hand in Intra-Kurdish Struggle, 12 May 2023, [url]
elit unit with intelligence capabilities, was likewise based in Sulaymaniyah. In its anti-ISIL operations, it reportedly also cooperated with the People’s Protection Units (YPG), a group viewed by the Turkish government as a Syrian branch of the PKK. Internal security forces (Asayish) engaged in anti-ISIL operations in the governorate. Iraqi border guards were deployed along the border between Iraq and Iran.

Three factions of the Iranian Kurdish opposition group Komala had adjacent bases near the village of Zirgwez southeast of the city of Sulaymaniyah. Oral sources cited by Landinfo confirmed that the Komala groups were still present at their bases in Zirgwez as of November 2023.

There was a reported presence of PKK members in the governorate, and Turkish authorities claimed in April 2023 that PKK activity was increasing, claiming that the group had infiltrated security at Sulaymaniyah International Airport. ISIL had only a ‘very limited’ presence in the KRI although there were several media reports of suspected ISIL members being arrested during the reference period.

**Recent security trends**

Throughout the reference period, Turkish forces conducted operations against PKK targets in the governorate, including in Sharbazher, Chamcharal, Panjwin, and Pshdar districts. According to a representative of the human rights organisation Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT), cited by the Rudaw news website, Türkiye conducted 420 strikes in Sulaymaniyah in 2023. In addition to carrying out strikes directed against the PKK, suspected Turkish drones also targeted a convoy of Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and ISIL was likewise based in Sulaymaniyah. In its anti-ISIL operations, it reportedly also cooperated with the People’s Protection Units (YPG), a group viewed by the Turkish government as a Syrian branch of the PKK. Internal security forces (Asayish) engaged in anti-ISIL operations in the governorate. Iraqi border guards were deployed along the border between Iraq and Iran.

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killed several CTG members at Arbat airport where members of the Syria-based YPG were reportedly receiving training.\textsuperscript{1017} In January 2024, Turkish forces also increased attacks on the PUK.\textsuperscript{1018}

Several civilians were also reportedly killed or injured in drone strikes, including in at least two suspected Turkish strikes in Panjwin district\textsuperscript{1019} and unidentified strikes in the same district\textsuperscript{1020} and in an area of Pshdar district near the Qandil Mountains.\textsuperscript{1021} One unattributed drone strike hit a building in Kalar district that reportedly belonged to the Kurdistan Freedom Movement (KFM), a PKK-affiliated group, killing at least one unidentified person.\textsuperscript{1022}

There were also reports of targeted killings, including incidents linked to Türkiye’s National Intelligence Organization (MIT), which has expanded its area of operations by killing individuals with suspected links to the PKK in Chamchamal and Sulaymaniyah districts.\textsuperscript{1023} Moreover, an alleged ‘hitman’ of the Iranian state\textsuperscript{1024} killed two members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (PDKI) in the border town of Qaladiza\textsuperscript{1025} (Pshdar district),\textsuperscript{1026} while a member of the Komala of Revolutionary Toilers of Iranian Kurdistan (Shorshger) faction was assassinated in Zirgwez.\textsuperscript{1027}

Deadly clashes between the Komala factions Shorshger and Komala of the Toilers of Kurdistan (Zahmatkeshan) erupted in Zirgwez in June 2023 following heightened tensions between the two groups.\textsuperscript{1028}

### Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 127 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Sulaymaniyah governorate, of which 23 were coded as battles, 88 explosions/remote violence and 15 incidents of violence against civilians.\textsuperscript{1029} The highest number of security incidents was documented in Sulaymaniyah, and Sharbazher districts. According to ACLED data, Turkish forces and PKK were involved in the majority of events coded as battles and explosions/remote violence.

\textsuperscript{1017} Rudaw, YPG members were being trained at Arbat airport during Monday strike; Turkey, 19 September 2023, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{1018} International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., \url{url}
\textsuperscript{1019} Rudaw, Family says three civilians killed in Friday drone strike, 12 August 2023, \url{url}; Shafaq News, Turkish aircraft attack PKK sites in Duhok, 9 August 2023, \url{url}; Airwars, US-led coalition in Iraq & Syria [filter: Sulaymaniyah; Turkish-Military], as of 4 March 2024, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{1020} Rudaw, Family says three civilians killed in Friday drone strike, 12 August 2023, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{1021} EPIC, ISHM: September 21 – 28, 2023, 28 September 2023, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{1022} Shafaq News, Unknown drone strike targets building in Kalar, 1 March 2024, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{1023} ACLED, Regional Overview Middle East – June 2023, 6 July 2023, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{1024} Rudaw, Two KDPI members killed in Sulaimani province, 7 July 2023, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{1025} Hengaw, Hengaw’s Investigation into the Assassination of Two Members of the KDPI in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, 7 July 2023, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{1026} Rudaw, Closure of Iranian border crossing crushes Kurdish village economy, 8 February 2020, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{1027} Rudaw, Komala blames Iran in killing of member in Sulaimani, 16 March 2024, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{1028} New Arab (The), Two fighters killed during infighting between rival Iranian Kurdish parties in N. Iraq, 23 June 2023, \url{url}; Kurdistan24, Two killed in Iranian-Kurdish opposition parties’ feud in Sulaimani, 22 June 2023, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{1029} EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), \url{url}
Figure 28. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Sulaymaniyah governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.\textsuperscript{1030}

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 22 events leading to fatalities in Sulaymaniyah governorate.\textsuperscript{1031}

**Civilian casualties**

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 10 civilian casualties in Sulaymaniyah governorate.\textsuperscript{1032} For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP recorded 3 civilian deaths in Sulaymaniyah governorate.\textsuperscript{1033}

\textsuperscript{\textcopyright EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), \url{url}}

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

\textsuperscript{\textcopyright EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024}

\textsuperscript{\textcopyright EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024}
Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

During the reference period, there were at least two separate rocket attacks on the Khor Mor gas field in Qadir Karam subdistrict (Chamchamal district). One of them resulted in widespread temporary power outages. According to the pro-Kurdish Shafaq News website, there were 3,512 registered minefields in the KRI. Data from the Iraqi Directorate of Mine Action cited by Rudaw indicated that more than 200 square kilometres of the KRI’s territory remained contaminated with landmines and remnants of war. Remnants of war in the KRI comprised items planted by the former Iraqi government’s armed forces, by Iranian forces during the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988), and remnants from the Türkiye-PKK conflict. As of the end of 2022, the Mine Action Review stated with reference to the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA) that the KRI had no areas registered as being contaminated by cluster munitions. During the reference period, several civilians were killed or injured by remnants of war in Kalar and Panjwin districts and near the town of Mawat.

1034 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
1035 EPIC, ISHM: January 25 – February 1, 2024, 1 February 2024, [url]; EPIC, ISHM: August 24 – 31, 2023, 31 August 2023, [url]
1036 Rudaw, Sulaimani’s key gas field targeted by rocket, 22 June 2022, [url]
1037 EPIC, ISHM: January 25 – February 1, 2024, 1 February 2024, [url]
1038 BBC News, Iraq media guide, 24 February 2023, [url]
1039 Shafaq News, Duhok detonates 100 mines and unexploded bombs, 15 February 2023, [url]
1040 Rudaw, Over 2,100 square km still contaminated by mines in Iraq, 23 December 2023, [url]
1041 Shafaq News, Duhok detonates 100 mines and unexploded bombs, 15 February 2023, [url]
1042 Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url], p. 61
1044 basnews, Landmine Blast Severely Wounds Kurdish Villager in Sulaymaniyah, 27 April 2023, [url]; EPIC, ISHM: March 7 – 14, 2024, 14 March 2024, [url]
1045 basnews, Landmine Blast Severely Wounds Kurdish Villager in Sulaymaniyah, 27 April 2023, [url]
**Conflict-induced displacement and return**

IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)\(^{1046}\) statistics as of December 2023 did not record any IDPs originating from Sulaymaniyah\(^{1047}\) or returnees living in the governorate.\(^{1048}\)

### 2.11. Basrah

**General description of governorate**

Basrah (Basra, Al-Basrah, Al-Basra) is Iraq’s southeasternmost governorate. It has internal borders with the governorates of Muthanna, Thi-Qar (Dhi Qar), and Missan\(^{1050}\) and shares international borders with Iran to the east and Kuwait to the south. It also borders Saudi-Arabia.
at the tripoint with Kuwait. The governorate’s capital is Basrah city. The governorate is divided into the following districts: Abu Al-Khaseeb, Al-Mahoudiya (Al-Midaina, Al-Madina), Al-Qurna (Al-Qarna), Al-Zubair, Basrah, Al-Faw, and Shatt Al-Arab.

Basrah governorate’s population in 2022 was estimated at 3,223,158. The majority of its residents are Shia Arab and the governorate has been described as ‘a stronghold of Shiites in southern Iraq’, although it is also home to a minority of Sunni Arabs and small communities of Mandaeans and Christians.

For further information on the governorate’s ethno-religious composition as well as its economy, please refer to section 2.11.1 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

**Armed actors’ presence and control**

For information on the governorate’s conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to sections 2.11.2 and 2.11.3 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

Security actors in the governorate consisted of the Iraqi Army, police, PMF, and armed political parties including the Sadrist Movement’s Saraya al-Salam and the Coordination Framework (CF)-affiliated Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH). The Basrah Operations Command (BasOC) is headquartered in Basrah city, and its commander was also in charge of the Badr-affiliated 1st PMF Brigade (Imam Muhammad al Jawad). According to a local tribal leader cited by Shafaq News, security forces were weak and subordinated to political interest groups. Indeed, according to Haidar Al-Ibrahimi, CEO of Peace Paradigms and an expert on peacebuilding and tribal reconciliation who was interviewed by EUAA for an April 2023 report, tribes in Basrah and other parts of southern Iraq ‘are heavily polarized and supported by key armed actors and have become a key competitor to state’s security institutions’.

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1051 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Al-Basrah Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url]; Fürtig, H., Geschichte des Irak [History of Iraq] [Map], 2016, pp. 188-189
1052 EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url]
1054 Iraq, CSO, [المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url], p. 8
1055 Skelton, M. and Saleem, Z.A., Living among the Hashd, IRIS, July 2021, [url], p. 18
1056 Al-Shammari, I., An Independent Federal State for Sunnis in Iraq, CFRI, 14 February 2024, [url]
1057 Skelton, M. and Saleem, Z.A., Living among the Hashd, IRIS, July 2021, [url], p. 18
1058 PAX, Human Security Survey: Iraq, Basra, 8 February 2024, [url], p. 1
1059 Ali, S., Between Power Sharing and Power Consolidation: The Impact of Iraq’s Provincial Elections Results, TWI, 7 March 2024, [url]
1060 Al-Monitor, Understanding Iraq’s Coordination Framework, 13 August 2022, [url]
1061 Shafaq News, Observers warn of potential conflict between CF and Sadrist movement in southern Iraqi cities, 11 December 2023, [url]
1062 USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url], p. 19
1063 ISW and CTP, The Leadership and Purpose of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces, 19 March 2024, [url]
1065 EUAA, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url], p. 83
Both the Basrah Police Command and the Iraqi National Security Service (INSS) were tasked with combating drug trafficking, while the 16th Border Brigade and intelligence agencies cracked down on cross-border smuggling and infiltration. In late 2022, the authorities began to fortify the southeastern section of Iraq’s border with Iran. By August 2023, over 700 towers and numerous thermal cameras had been installed along the border between Basrah’s Al-Faw district and Sulaymaniyah governorate, according to the commander of Iraq’s Border Guards Force.

Recent security trends

A survey on human security conducted by PAX in Basrah every year since 2018 assessed that ‘the general security perceptions of local communities across the districts of Basra have improved’. At the same time, the governorate has long witnessed intra-Shia conflicts between the Sadr Movement’s Saraya Al-Salam militia and AAH over control of the governorate’s rich oil resources.

These tensions came to the fore in summer 2023 as unidentified armed individuals carried out attacks on the office of an MP from the AAH-affiliated Sadiqoun bloc, on a building complex serving as a PMF headquarters and on the office of the Imam Ali Brigades, with no reports of casualties. Meanwhile, AAH allegedly carried out an attack on the residence of a Saraya Al-Salam commander, triggering armed protests by Saraya Al-Salam. Security forces were reportedly reinforced in the governorate.

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1066 Rudaw, Iraq sacks Basra’s anti-narcotic head, 1 December 2022, url
1067 NINA, 10 kilograms of crystal seized from three drug traffickers in Basra, 1 January 2024, url; INA, 5 drug dealers held, 10 kg of hashish seized in Basra, 23 November 2023, url; INA, INSS arrests a pharmacist working in drug trafficking in Basra, 27 March 2023, url; Diyaruna, IRGC and its proxies exploit drug trade at expense of regional neighbours, 19 May 2023, url
1068 NINA, 17 Foreign Infiltrators, Tried To Cross The Border In Basra Sector Illegally, Arrested, 16 July 2023, url
1069 NINA, 14 Persons Of Foreign Nationality, Tried To Infiltrate Into Basra, Arrested, 24 June 2023, url; NINA, Eight foreigners who tried to infiltrate Iraqi territory were arrested in Basra, 24 June 2023, url
1070 NINA, 17 Foreign Infiltrators, Tried To Cross The Border In Basra Sector Illegally, Arrested, 16 July 2023, url; NINA, 14 Persons Of Foreign Nationality, Tried To Infiltrate Into Basra, Arrested, 24 June 2023, url; NINA, Eight foreigners who tried to infiltrate Iraqi territory were arrested in Basra, 24 June 2023, url
1071 Diyaruna, Iraq fortifies border with Iran to curb infiltration, smuggling, 13 December 2022, url
1072 INA, Including plans to end smuggling, (INA) opens 9 files with the commander of the border guards, 9 August 2023, url
1073 PAX is a Netherlands-based organisation that engages in peace work. PAX, Who we are, n.d., url
1074 PAX, Human Security Survey: Iraq, Basra, 8 February 2024, url, p. 2
1075 PAX, Human Security Survey: Iraq, Basra, 8 February 2024, url, p. 1
1076 Ali, S., Between Power Sharing and Power Consolidation: The Impact of Iraq’s Provincial Elections Results, TWI, 7 March 2024, url; Alaaladin, R., Shiite rivalries could break Iraq’s deceptive calm in 2023 [Commentary], Brookings, 1 March 2023, url
1077 EPIC, ISHM: June 22 – July 6, 2023, 6 July 2023, url; EPIC, ISHM: June 15 – 22, 2023, 22 June 2023, url
1078 EPIC, ISHM: June 22 – July 6, 2023, 6 July 2023, url
1079 NINA, Targeting the office of the Imam Ali Brigades, north of Basra, with gunfire, 12 August 2023, url
1080 EPIC, ISHM: June 22 – July 6, 2023, 6 July 2023, url; EPIC, ISHM: June 15 – 22, 2023, 22 June 2023, url; NINA, Targeting the office of the Imam Ali Brigades, north of Basra, with gunfire, 12 August 2023, url
1081 EPIC, ISHM: June 22 – July 6, 2023, 6 July 2023, url
1082 New Arab (The), Iraq: Sadr supporters shut down rival party's headquarters after 'insults' against leader's father, 16 July 2023, url

Meanwhile, several armed attacks were carried out by unidentified perpetrators against civilians,\footnote{Media Line (The), Daily Clashes Between Iran-Backed Militias in Iraq Kill Over 200 Fighters, 21 February 2024, \url{https://www.the-media-line.org/story/2024/02/21/daily-clashes-between-iran-backed-militias-in-iraq-kill-over-200-fighters}} including a gun attack on a residential house in Al-Harthar area that left one woman dead and several family members injured.\footnote{The Media Line news agency, Explosive device near AAH headquarters; gunfire targets government buildings, 17 March 2024, \url{https://www.the-media-line.org/story/2024/03/17/explosive-device-near-aah-headquarters-gunfire-targets-government-buildings}} Especially from September 2023 onwards, there were multiple reports of armed tribal disputes,\footnote{NINA, A woman was killed and others from one family were injured in an armed attack in Basra, 3 January 2024, \url{https://www.ninamedia.com/story/2024/01/03/a-woman-was-killed-and-others-from-one-family-were-injured-in-an-armed-attack-in-basra}} with clashes leaving several people injured in the Tamimiya,\footnote{NINA, Five people killed and wounded in an armed conflict in Basra, 8 November 2023, \url{https://www.ninamedia.com/story/2023/11/08/five-people-killed-and-wounded-in-an-armed-conflict-in-basra}} Al-Deir (Al-Zwain),\footnote{Military Line (The), Daily Clashes Between Iran-Backed Militias in Iraq Kill Over 200 Fighters, 21 February 2024, \url{https://www.the-media-line.org/story/2024/02/21/daily-clashes-between-iran-backed-militias-in-iraq-kill-over-200-fighters}} and Khor Al-Zubair areas.\footnote{NINA, Two people injured in a tribal dispute in Basra, 8 March 2024; NINA, An armed assasination of a Sadr supporter by AAH militants.} At least one woman was killed in an alleged family dispute,\footnote{NINA, Five people killed and wounded in an armed conflict in Basra, 8 November 2023, \url{https://www.ninamedia.com/story/2023/11/08/five-people-killed-and-wounded-in-an-armed-conflict-in-basra}} and there were reports of unspecified events.
'quarrels'\textsuperscript{1101} and violent crime,\textsuperscript{1102} although the Basrah police chief was quoted as saying that the crime rate in 2023 was 16\% lower than in 2022.\textsuperscript{1103}

In a further development, following the public burning of a copy of the Quran by a right-wing group in Copenhagen in July 2023, protesters in Basrah city attacked the premises of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), with no casualties reported.\textsuperscript{1104}

**Security incidents**

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 108 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Basrah governorate, of which 55 were coded as battles, 14 explosions/remote violence, and 39 incidents of violence against civilians.\textsuperscript{1105} The highest number of security incidents was documented in Basrah and Al Zubair districts. According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups and unidentified tribal militias were involved in the majority of events coded as battles and violence against civilians.

![Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Basrah governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.](image)

\textsuperscript{1101} NINA, /10/ persons accused creating a quarrel arrested north of Basra, 1 January 2024, [url](#).
\textsuperscript{1102} Shafaq News, Basra man faces tribal pressure after suing robbers, 3 March 2024, [url]; NINA, Interior Ministry: The Killer of a truck Driver arrested in Basra, 19 July 2023, [url].
\textsuperscript{1103} Al-Sharqiya, Crime rate in Basra decreased by 16\%, 31 December 2023, [url].
\textsuperscript{1104} AP, Protesters try to storm Baghdad’s Green Zone over the burning of Quran and Iraqi flag in Denmark, 22 July 2023, [url].
\textsuperscript{1105} EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url].
\textsuperscript{1106} EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url].
For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP did not record any events resulting in fatalities in Basrah governorate.\(^{107}\)

**Civilian casualties**

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 12 civilian casualties in Basrah governorate.\(^{108}\)

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Basrah governorate.\(^{109}\)

![Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI in Basrah governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.](image)

**Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war**

No information on new conflict-related infrastructure damage occurring in the reference period could be found within the time constraints of this report. As of the end of 2022, the head of the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA)’s Regional Mine Action Centre-South was quoted as saying that 1,237,000,000 square metres of the governorate’s area were contaminated with mines, cluster munitions and remnants of war,\(^{111}\) whilst the Mine Action Review estimated the area contaminated with cluster munitions specifically at 46,497,041 square metres.\(^{112}\) During the reference period, there were reports of several individuals being

\(^{107}\) EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

\(^{108}\) EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

\(^{109}\) EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

\(^{110}\) EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

\(^{111}\) Al-Sharqiya, Basra most contaminated with war remnants, 17 December 2022, [url]

\(^{112}\) Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, [url], p. 61
killed or injured by old IEDs in the southern Safwan subdistrict and in the South Rumaila area.

**Conflict-induced displacement and return**

IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) statistics as of December 2023 did not record any IDPs originating from Basrah or returnees living in the governorate.

### 2.12. Karbala

Map 13: Karbala governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.

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**Footnotes:**

m3 EPIC, ISHM: August 31 – September 7, 2023, url; NINA, Two children were injured in a military remnant explosion in a Safwan farm, west of Basra, 18 July 2023, url

m4 EPIC, ISHM: December 14 – 28, 2023, 28 December 2023, url; NINA, Two children killed and their third brother wounded in a mine explosion in the Rumaila area, west of Basra, 11 September 2023, url; EPIC, ISHM: April 27 – May 4, 2023, 4 May 2023, url

m5 Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, url, p. 1

m6 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, url

m7 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, url

m8 UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, url
**General description of governorate**

Karbala (Kerbal, Kerbela) governorate is located in central Iraq, southwest of Baghdad. It has internal borders with Anbar, Najaf, and Babil governorates and is divided into the following districts: Ain Al-Tamur, Al-Hindiya, and Karbala. The capital of the governorate is Karbala city. The governorate’s population in 2022 was estimated at 1,350,577 and the majority of its inhabitants are Shia Arab.

For further information on the governorate’s ethno-religious composition as well as its economy, please refer to section 2.12.1 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

**Armed actors’ presence and control**

For information on the governorate’s conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to sections 2.12.2 and 2.12.3 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

In 2023, the Iraqi Army transferred the governorate's security responsibilities to the local police. The Karbala Operations Command is headquartered in Karbala city. PMFs operating in the governorate included the Liwa al-Tafuf (13th PMF Brigade), which ran a training centre in Karbala, the Harakat Al-Nujaba (HAN) (whose fighters were also deployed in several other governorates to man positions and checkpoints and to participate in the fight against ISIL), and possibly the 37th and 41st PMF Brigades. The existence of a major KH complex in Ain Al-Tamr district for the production of rocket artillery, as claimed by security expert Michael Knights, had not been officially confirmed as of May 2023. The PMF reportedly played the most active role among all security actors in protecting the Arbaeen pilgrimage.

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119 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Kerbala Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, url
120 EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, url
121 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Kerbala Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, url
122 EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, url
123 Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الاحصائية 2022-2023, 21 August 2023, url, p. 8
124 EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, url
125 New Arab (The), Transfer of security responsibilities from Iraq's army to local police stalled by challenges, 18 September 2023, url
126 USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, url, p. 19
127 TWI, Profile: Liwa al-Tafuf (13th PMF Brigade), 3 February 2024, url
128 Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (The), The Nujaba Movement – the Movement of the Noble Ones: One of the dominant pro-Iranian militias in Iraq, 14 May 2023, url, p. 10
129 NINA, A fighter in the Popular Mobilization killed in an explosive device explosion in the Anbar desert, 27 May 2023
130 NINA, The Popular Mobilization carries out a pre-emptive security operation on the Baghdad-Samarra road, 2 September 2023
131 Rudolf, I., Tracing the Role of the Violent Entrepreneurs in the Iraqi Post-Conflict Economy, New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy, May 2023, url, p. 8
132 AGSIW, Identity and Power Politics: Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces on the Arbaeen Pilgrimage, 24 October 2023, url
Recent security trends

During the reference period, the 2nd and 6th Brigades of the Energy Police carried out several operations to combat petroleum smuggling, while a number of alleged drug dealers were arrested in anti-drug trafficking operations conducted by the governorate’s Directorate for Combating Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances, the 5th Brigade of the Rapid Response Division Command, and the Karbala Intelligence and Security Directorate. In February 2023, police also carried out a campaign to search farms and desert areas for wanted persons and illegal weapons, arresting several individuals and seizing ammunitions and various types of weapons.

In December 2023, an operation by the Karbala police command to arrest three wanted gang members led to an exchange of gunfire in which an officer was injured. Meanwhile, a member of the 37th PMF Brigade was killed in an IED explosion in the desert area between Karbala and Anbar. In another case, a decapitated body was found, with no details regarding the motive behind the killing.

Arrangements to ensure security during the 2023 Arbaeen pilgrimage included the stationing of security forces along the pilgrimage routes, with 20,000 PMFs reportedly deployed to secure the area between the Iraq-Iran border and Karbala city. Moreover, some 3,000 PMF intelligence operatives infiltrated the ranks of pilgrims, according to the PMF chief of staff. No information could be found on security-related incidents around Arbaeen in 2023.

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 11 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Basrah governorate, of which 5 were coded as battles, 1 explosions/remote violence, and 5 incidents of violence against civilians. All incidents occurred in Karbala district.

1131 INA, (3) Accused of smuggling petroleum products arrested in Salah al-Din and Karbala, 9 February 2024, url
1132 NINA, (3) persons accused of smuggling petroleum products arrested and two vehicles seized in Babylon and Karbala, 10 March 2024, url; INA, (3) Accused of smuggling petroleum products arrested in Salah al-Din and Karbala, 9 February 2024, url; NINA, Three persons accused of smuggling petroleum derivatives arrested and their vehicles seized in Babylon and Karbala, 1 October 2023
1133 NINA, (3) persons accused of smuggling petroleum products arrested and two vehicles seized in Babylon and Karbala, 10 March 2024, url; INA, (3) Accused of smuggling petroleum products arrested in Salah al-Din and Karbala, 9 February 2024, url; NINA, Three persons accused of smuggling petroleum derivatives arrested and their vehicles seized in Babylon and Karbala, 1 October 2023
1134 NINA, The Rapid Response Division arrests two people accused of drug trafficking in Karbala, 3 March 2024, url; NINA, Karbala police arrest a dangerous drug dealer, 14 January 2024, url
1135 NINA, The Rapid Response Division arrests two people accused of drug trafficking in Karbala, 3 March 2024, url
1136 NINA, Intelligence forces arrest a dangerous terrorist element south of Baghdad, 1 March 2023
1137 NINA, Karbala police finds large quantities of weapons and equipment, 10 February 2023, url
1138 NINA, Gang members arrested after an armed clash in Karbala, 26 December 2023
1139 NINA, A fighter in the Popular Mobilization killed in an explosive device explosion in the Anbar desert, 27 May 2023
1140 NINA, A Decapitated Body Found and Perpetrator Arrested in Karbala, 9 February 2023
1141 National (The), Millions flock to Iraqi city of Karbala for Arbaeen pilgrimage, 6 September 2023, url
1142 AGSIW, Identity and Power Politics: Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces on the Arbaeen Pilgrimage, 24 October 2023, url
1143 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), url
For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any events resulting in fatalities in Karbala governorate.1146

### Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI did not record any civilian casualties in Karbala governorate.1147 For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Karbala governorate.1148

### Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

No information on new conflict-related infrastructure damage occurring in the reference period could be found within the time constraints of this report. As of the end of 2022, the Mine Action Review estimated the area contaminated with cluster munitions at 141,910 square metres.1149

### Conflict-induced displacement and return

IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)1150 statistics as of December 2023 did not record any IDPs originating from Karbala1151 or returnees living in the governorate.1152

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1146 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
1147 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
1148 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
1149 Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, url, p. 61
1150 Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, url, p. 1
1151 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, url
1152 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, url
2.13. Missan

Map 14: Missan governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.¹¹⁵³

General description of governorate

Missan (Maysan) governorate is located in southeast Iraq and has borders with Wassit, Basrah, and Thi-Qar governorates, as well as with Iran to the east. The governorate is divided into six districts: Ali Al-Gharbi, Al-Mijar Al-Kabir (Al Mejar Al Kabir), Al-Maimouna, Al-Kahla, Amarah (Al Amara), and Qal’at Salih (Qalat Saleh). The capital is Amarah.¹¹⁵⁴

For 2022, the Iraqi CSO estimated the governorate’s population at 1,233,053.¹¹⁵⁵

¹¹⁵³ UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, url
¹¹⁵⁴ UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Maysan Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, url
¹¹⁵⁵ Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, url, p. 8
The vast majority of Missan’s population is composed of Shia Arabs. Missan is also home to a Sunni minority, as well as small communities of Christians and Mandaeans.1156 Moreover, Faily Kurdish communities1157 and Black Iraqis reportedly existed in Missan governorate.1158

For further information on the ethno-religious composition and economy in Missan, please refer to section 2.13 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

**Armed actors’ presence and control**

For information on the conflict background, please refer to section 2.13.2 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

In the reference period, the ISF was present in Missan governorate1159 and, according to a February 2024 US Department of Defence (USDOD) report, the Missan Operation Command of the ISF had its headquarters in Amarah.1160

Furthermore, local sources indicated the presence of PMF in Missan governorate.1161 Other Shiite political forces with armed militias, such as the rival groups of Muqtada Al-Sadr and the Asa’ib Ahl Al-Haq (AAH), were present in Missan and other southern Iraqi governorates, where they maintained their strongholds. The Sadr movement, although weakened by opposing forces such as AAH, reportedly still maintained control over some areas and economic sectors in Missan governorate, particularly the health sector.1162

**Recent security trends**

In February 2024, tensions between the Sadr movement and AAH escalated in Missan, resulting in armed clashes. The escalation was provoked by the killing of Naji al-Kaabi, a senior AAH member, by unidentified armed men in Missan governorate,1163 which, according to an Al-Arab article, was attributed to the Sadr movement.1164

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1156 EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url]
1157 UNHCR, Statelessness and Risks of Statelessness in Iraq: Faili Kurd and Bidoon Communities, September 2022, [url], p. 10
1158 Atlantic Council, Black Iraqis have been invisible for a long time. Their vibrant culture and struggle must be recognized., 24 March 2023, [url]
1159 France, OFPRA, Iraq: Veille sécuritaire du 1er juillet 2022 au 30 juin 2023 [Iraq: Security monitoring, 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023], 20 September 2023, [url], p. 11
1160 USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023, 9 February 2024, [url], p. 19
1161 NINA, [The Popular Mobilization Forces arrested a person promoting the dissolved Baath Party in Missan governorate], 4 February 2024, [url]; Al-Mirbad, [PMU commemorate ‘leaders of victory’ in Missan in celebration of achievements of martyrs], 3 January 2024, [url]; Al-Mirbad, [PMU in Missan organize a protest against current situation in Gaza], 20 October 2023, [url]
1162 Al-Arab, [The security in Iraqi cities depends on hostilities between Muqtada Al-Sadr and Qais Al-Khazali], 6 February 2024, [url]
1163 Sky News Arabia, [Prominent leader of Asa’ib Ahl Al-Haq militia killed], 4 February 2024, [url]; Shafaq News, Assassination of senior Asaib Ahl al-Haq leader in Maysan, 4 February 2024, [url]; EPIC, ISHM: February 1 – 8, 2024, 8 February 2024, [url]
1164 Al-Arab, [The security in Iraqi cities depends on hostilities between Muqtada Al-Sadr and Qais Al-Khazali], 6 February 2024, [url]
Sources also reported tribal clashes in Missan governorate.165 According to Middle East based researcher and analyst Haley Bobseine, who was consulted for an April 2023 EUAA report, Missan was one of the Iraqi governorates with the highest number of tribal disputes.166 Water shortages have reportedly led to conflicts between tribes living in the border regions of Missan and Wasit governorates, leading to violent clashes in the past.167 According to a police officer in the governorate cited in an August 2023 Al-Araby Al-Jadeed article, clan conflicts have been a major issue for the governorate.168

Moreover, in the reference period, a number of attacks carried out by unidentified perpetrators on civilians and individuals of certain profiles or on their houses169, including teachers,170 a private security agent,171 a hospital director,172 government officials,173 a member of parliament,174 and a former member of parliament,175 were reported in Missan governorate.

Furthermore, sources indicated that drug criminality, including clashes between ISF and drug traffickers, was an issue in Missan governorate.176 ISF carried out a number of operations...

165 Shafaq News, [One person killed and two injured in ‘violent’ tribal clash in Missan governorate], 18 June 2023, [url]. Shafaq News, [Tribal leader killed in conflict in southern Iraq], 18 August 2023, [url]; INA, [Missan Police holds security conference to reduce tribal conflicts], 22 October 2023, [url]; Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, [Iraq: Tribal threats haunt doctors], 25 August 2023, [url].

166 EUAA, [Arabic tribes and customary law [comment made by Middle East based researcher and analyst Haley Bobseine, who was consulted for the report], April 2023], [url], p. 82

167 E-International Relations, Water Scarcity and Environmental Peacebuilding: A Lens on Southern Iraq, 18 May 2023, [url], p. 2

168 Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, [The situation in Missan governorate: tribal threats reach a critical level], 9 February 2024, [url]; Shafaq News, [Targeting of former member of parliament in Missan governorate: tribal threats in a critical level], 6 February 2024, [url]; Shafaq News, [Targeting of government official’s house in Missan governorate with explosive device: video], 6 February 2024, [url]; Shafaq News, [Iraq: Detonation of explosive device in Missan governorate], 10 February 2023, [url]; Al-Mirbad, [Iraq: Detonation of explosive device in Missan governorate], 10 February 2023, [url].
against organised crime groups in the areas of drugs and smuggling, as well as against unidentified tribal groups.\footnote{1177}

## Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 130 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Missan governorate, of which 50 were coded as battles, 10 explosions/remote violence, and 70 incidents of violence against civilians.\footnote{1178} The majority of security incidents were documented in Al Kahla district. According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups were involved in the majority of events coded as explosions/remote violence, and violence against civilians. Tribal militias were the most encountered actor in events coded as battles.

![Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Missan governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.](image)

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP did not record any events resulting in fatalities in Missan governorate.\footnote{1179}

\footnote{1177} France, OFPRA, Irak: Veille sécuritaire du 1er juillet 2022 au 30 juin 2023 [Iraq: Security monitoring, 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023], 20 September 2023, \url{url}, p. 11
\footnote{1178} EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), \url{url}
\footnote{1179} EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 1 civilian casualty in Missan governorate.1180 For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Missan governorate.1181

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

Information on conflict-related infrastructure damage in the reference period could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

As of the end of 2022, around 955 962 square metres of Missan governorate’s area were reported to be cluster munition-contaminated.1182 In August 2023 and September 2023, two cases of civilians killed by landmine explosions were reported in the border area of Missan governorate.1183 Further relevant information on explosive remnants of war could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

Conflict-induced displacement and return

As of December 2023, IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)1184 did not document any displacement from Missan governorate to other parts of the country or within Missan governorate.1185

As of December 2023, IOM has not documented any returns to Missan governorate.1186
2.14. Muthanna

Map 15: Basrah governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.\textsuperscript{1187}

General description of governorate

Muthanna (Al-Muthanna) governorate is located in south-western Iraq and has borders with Najaf, Qadissiya, Thi-Qar, and Basrah governorates and an international border with Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{1188} It is the country’s second largest governorate and mostly consists of desert and dry land.\textsuperscript{1189} The governorate is divided into four districts: Al-Samawa (Samawa, Samawah), Al-Khidhir (Al-Khithir), Al-Rumaitha, and Al-Salman. The capital of Muthanna is the town of Al-Samawa in the governorate’s north.\textsuperscript{1190}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1187} UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, \url{[url]}
\item \textsuperscript{1188} UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Muthanna Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, \url{[url]}
\item \textsuperscript{1189} UNICEF, WASHing back hope for the people of southern Iraq, 18 April 2021, \url{[url]}
\item \textsuperscript{1190} UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Muthanna Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, \url{[url]}
\end{itemize}
For 2022, the Iraqi CSO estimated the governorate's population at 902,480. The northern areas around the Euphrates River are more densely populated than the desert districts in the governorate's south.

The majority of Muthanna’s inhabitants are Shia Arabs. Bidoon communities reportedly existed in Muthanna governorate. For further information on the ethno-religious composition and economy in Muthanna, please refer to section 2.14 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

Armed actors’ presence and control

For information on the conflict background, please refer to section 2.14.2 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

As of July 2023, EPIC reported that there was some competition around dominance between Shiite groups in the otherwise rather peaceful Muthanna governorate.

In early 2023, the Iraqi Army transferred security authority/duties in Muthanna governorate to the police. Moreover, sources indicated a PMF presence in Muthanna governorate.

Recent security trends

The Muthanna police command in February 2024 was reported as saying that the governorate had a stable security situation. According to EPIC, hostilities between Shia groups and militias, including the Sadr movement and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), which had been created after Saddam Hussein was overthrown, had calmed down and ‘peace returned’ in Muthanna governorate in recent years. Muthanna was not affected by the ISIL incursion and, according to EPIC, is ‘one of the safest’ Iraqi governorates.

In a May 2023 report, the UN Secretary-General reported on continued attacks, in the first half of 2023, on Iraqi contracted convoys transporting supplies for the international coalition against ISIL. The attacks targeted a number of governorates, including Muthanna, however, causing no casualties. The attacks, which were carried out by the International Resistance and
the group Revenge for Muhandis, resumed in January 2023 for the first time since August 2022.\textsuperscript{1200} Water shortages have reportedly led to conflicts between tribes in Muthanna,\textsuperscript{1201} as well as between tribes in Muthanna and Thi-Qar governorate and Muthanna and Al-Qadisiya governorate.\textsuperscript{1202}

Moreover, sources indicated that drug criminality was an issue in Muthanna governorate in the reference period.\textsuperscript{1203}

**Security incidents**

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 26 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Muthanna governorate, of which 18 were coded as battles, 3 explosions/remote violence, and 5 incidents of violence against civilians.\textsuperscript{1204} The majority of security incidents were documented in Al Samawa district. According to ACLED data, ISF forces and smugglers (coded as either ‘Actor1’ or ‘Actor2’) were involved in the majority of events coded as battles.

\textsuperscript{1200} UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, \url{url}, para. 17
\textsuperscript{1201} Al-Quds Al-Arabi, المثنى العراقية: الجفاف يُنذر بنزوح جماعي وصراع عشائري على المياه [Iraq’s Al-Muthanna governorate: Drought heralds mass displacement and tribal conflict over water resources], 3 October 2023, \url{url}; Jummar, ‘There is little water left’: Tribes of Al-Muthanna Fight over Groundwater, 16 July 2023, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{1202} E-International Relations, Water Scarcity and Environmental Peacebuilding: A Lens on Southern Iraq, 18 May 2023, \url{url}, p. 2
\textsuperscript{1203} INA, المثنى في ممارسة جماعية وتوقّف [Intelligence Agency: Drug dealer was captured in Muthanna], 15 January 2024, \url{url}; Baghdad Today, تفكيك شبكة تجارة المخدرات واتخاذ القبض على أفرادها في المثنى [Drug trafficking network dismantled and member arrested in Muthanna], 14 November 2023, \url{url}; NINA, الاستخبارات تطيح بتلعة من تجار ومروجي المخدرات في محاافظتي المثنى والنجف [Intelligence catches three drug dealers und traffickers in Najaf and Muthanna governorates], 2 October 2023, \url{url}; Rudaw, Iraq busts captagon lab in Muthanna, 16 July 2023, \url{url}; NINA, القبض على ثلاثة تجار مخدرات بحوزتهم (5) كيلو غرامات من مادة الكريستال في محافظة المثنى [Three drug dealers arrested in possession of 5 kilogram of crystal in Muthanna governorate], 9 May 2023, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{1204} EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), \url{url}
Figure 3. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Muthanna governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP did not record any events resulting in fatalities in Muthanna governorate.1205

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 5 civilian casualties in Muthanna governorate.1206 Between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Muthanna governorate.1207

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1205 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
1206 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
1207 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
Figure 34. Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI in Muthanna governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.\textsuperscript{1208}

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

As of the end of 2022, around 81 790 909 square metres of Muthanna governorate’s area were reported to be cluster munition-contaminated.\textsuperscript{1209} According to the 2023 Mine Action Review, Muthanna was one of the three most cluster munition contaminated governorates in Iraq.\textsuperscript{1210} Further relevant information on explosive remnants of war could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

Conflict-induced displacement and return

As of December 2023, IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)\textsuperscript{1211} did not document any displacement from Muthanna governorate to other parts of the country or within Muthanna governorate.\textsuperscript{1212}

As of December 2023, IOM had not documented any returns to Muthanna governorate.\textsuperscript{1213}

\textsuperscript{1208} EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
\textsuperscript{1209} Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, \url{url}, p. 61
\textsuperscript{1210} Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023, 1 August 2023, \url{url}, p. 66
\textsuperscript{1211} Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, \url{url}, p. 1
\textsuperscript{1212} IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{1213} IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, \url{url}
2.15. Najaf

Map 16: Najaf governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.\textsuperscript{1214}

**General description of governorate**

Najaf (Al-Najaf, An-Najaf) governorate is located in the southwest of Iraq. It has internal borders with the governorates of Anbar, Babil, Kerbala, Qadissiya, and Muthanna and shares an international border with Saudi Arabia to the south.\textsuperscript{1215} It is divided into the following districts: Al-Najaf, Al-Kufa, and Al-Manathira.\textsuperscript{1216} The governorate’s capital is Najaf city, and the other major city in the governorate is Al-Kufa. Both cities – along with Karbala city – are considered important holy sites among Shia Muslims.\textsuperscript{1217}

\textsuperscript{1214} UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{1215} UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Al-Najaf Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{1216} UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Al-Najaf District Reference Map 2020, 15 July 2020, \url{url}; UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Al-Najaf Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, \url{url}
\textsuperscript{1217} EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, \url{url}
The governorate’s population in 2022 was estimated at 1,630,807\textsuperscript{1218} and the majority of its inhabitants are Shia Arab.\textsuperscript{1219}

For further information on the governorate’s ethno-religious composition as well as its economy, please refer to section 2.15.1 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

**Armed actors’ presence and control**

For information on the governorate’s conflict background and on the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to sections 2.15.2 and 2.15.3 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

As of the end of 2023, Najaf did not have a provincial operations command of its own.\textsuperscript{1220} In 2023, the security responsibilities for the governorate were transferred from the Iraqi Army to the local police.\textsuperscript{1221} Apart from the Najaf Police Command,\textsuperscript{1222} security actors operating in the governorate included the Najaf Intelligence and Security Directorate\textsuperscript{1223} and PMF units such as the Abbas Combat Division\textsuperscript{1224} (26th PMF Brigade)\textsuperscript{1225} and the 2nd PMF Brigade.\textsuperscript{1226}

**Recent security trends**

The governorate has been described as ‘relatively peaceful’ in recent years.\textsuperscript{1227} During the reference period, it witnessed armed attacks on several offices of the Dawa party by supporters of the Sadrist Movement (mid-July 2023)\textsuperscript{1228} and unidentified militants (early December 2023)\textsuperscript{1229} as well as an attack on an AAH office in Najaf city amid rising tensions between Muqtada al-Sadr and rival militias in February 2024, with no reported casualties.\textsuperscript{1230}

Moreover, the day of the provincial council elections\textsuperscript{1231} on 18 December 2023, unidentified individuals attacked three\textsuperscript{1232} or four\textsuperscript{1233} voting centres in Najaf city and Al-Kufa with IEDs and
grenades,\textsuperscript{1234} with none of the attacks resulting in human casualties.\textsuperscript{1235} Najaf city also witnessed several attacks by unidentified perpetrators that targeted civilians, including an IED attack on a civilian vehicle,\textsuperscript{1236} a grenade thrown at a house that resulted in several civilians being injured,\textsuperscript{1237} and a gun attack on an individual who had only just been released from police detention, leaving him severely injured.\textsuperscript{1238} Meanwhile, an armed clash between two tribes in Al-Haydariyah subdistrict left a young girl injured.\textsuperscript{1239}

A number of alleged drug dealers were arrested in anti-drug trafficking operations carried out by the Najaf Intelligence and Security Directorate,\textsuperscript{1240} while the 2\textsuperscript{nd} PMF Brigade and the Najaf Police Command conducted at least two ‘pre-emptive’ security operations in the desert sector of the governorate.\textsuperscript{1241}

**Security incidents**

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 30 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Najaf governorate, of which 14 were coded as battles, 8 explosions/remote violence, and 8 incidents of violence against civilians.\textsuperscript{1242} The majority of security incidents were documented in Al Najaf district. According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups were involved in the majority of events coded as explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians.
Figure 35. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Najaf governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP did not record any events resulting in fatalities in Najaf governorate.1243

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 6 civilian casualties in Najaf governorate.1244 For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Najaf governorate.1245

1243 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
1244 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
1245 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
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Number of incidents and civilian casualties recorded by UNAMI in Najaf governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024.\textsuperscript{1246}

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

No information on new conflict-related infrastructure damage occurring in the reference period could be found within the time constraints of this report. As of the end of 2022, the Mine Action Review estimated the area contaminated with cluster munitions at 3 700 442 square metres.\textsuperscript{1247} Several civilians were killed or injured by explosive remnants in the Al-Askari neighbourhood of Najaf city\textsuperscript{1248} and in the Al-Shabaka area near the Iraqi-Saudi border.\textsuperscript{1249}

Conflict-induced displacement and return

IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)\textsuperscript{1250} statistics as of December 2023 did not record any IDPs originating from Najaf\textsuperscript{1251} or returnees living in the governorate.\textsuperscript{1252}

\textsuperscript{1246} EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
\textsuperscript{1247} Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, \texttt{url}, p. 61
\textsuperscript{1248} EPIC, ISHM: April 13 – 20, 2023, 20 April 2023, \texttt{url}
\textsuperscript{1249} NINA, A child injured by a war projectile explosion, west of Najaf, 1 February 2023, \texttt{url}
\textsuperscript{1250} Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, \texttt{url}, p. 1
\textsuperscript{1251} IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, \texttt{url}
\textsuperscript{1252} IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, \texttt{url}
2.16. Qadissiya

Map 17: Qadissiya governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.

General description of governorate

Qadissiya governorate, officially Diwaniya governorate, was renamed ‘Qadissiya’ (Qadisiyah) in 1976 before this decision was reverted in 2008. However, the name Qadissiya is still used, including by the authorities. The governorate is located in southern central Iraq and has borders with Babil, Wassit, Thi-Qar, Muthanna, and Najaf governorates. It is divided into the following districts: Diwaniya (Al Diwaniya), Afak (Afaq), Shamiya (Al-Shamiya), and Al-Hamza. The capital city is Diwaniya.

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1253 UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, url
1254 Iraq, Diwaniya Governorate [main page], n.d., url
1255 EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, url
1256 University of Al-Qadisiyay, Main Page, n. d., url; Iraq, CSO, الموجز الإحصائي القادسية 2018 [Statistical Summary Al-Qadissiya 2018], n.d., url; Iraq, Rasheed Bank, فروع المصرف في محافظة القادسية [Bank branches in Qadissiya governorate], n.d., url
1257 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Al-Qadissiya Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, url
For 2022, the Iraqi Central Statistical Organization (CSO) estimated the governorate’s population at 1,430,714.\(^{1258}\) The majority of Qadissiya governorate’s inhabitants are Shia Arabs.\(^{1259}\) Roma live in isolated villages in the governorate.\(^{1260}\) Moreover, Bidoon communities reportedly existed in the governorate.\(^{1261}\) For further information on the governorate’s ethno-religious composition and economy, please refer to section 2.16.1 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

**Armed actors’ presence and control**

For information on the conflict background and the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to section 2.16.2 and 2.16.3 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

In September 2022, the PMF carried out raids in the southern governorates, including Qadissiya, arresting a number of individuals with alleged ties to various groups, including the Baath party and the Tishreen movement.\(^{1262}\) In July 2023, the PMF raided the local premises of the Iraqi journalist syndicate in Qadissiya, prompting wide condemnation by journalists, as well as on social media.\(^{1263}\)

Armed groups, including the Ashab Al-Kahf,\(^{1264}\) were also reported to be active in the governorate during the reporting period.\(^{1265}\)

According to the CEO of Peace Paradigms, Haidar Al-Ibrahimi, an expert on peacebuilding and tribal reconciliation who was interviewed by EUAA for an April 2023 report on tribes in Iraq, tribes in southern Iraq, including in Qadissiya, ‘are heavily polarized and supported by key armed actors and have become a key competitor to state’s security institutions’.\(^{1266}\)

Further information on the presence and areas of control of armed actors in Qadissiya governorate in the reference period could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

\(^{1258}\) Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الإحصائية 2022-2023، المجموعة الثانية، [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, url, p. 8
\(^{1259}\) EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, url
\(^{1261}\) UNHCR, Statelessness and Risks of Statelessness in Iraq: Faili Kurd and Bidoon Communities, September 2022, url, p. 23; Stateless Journey, Statelessness in Iraq, November 2019, url, p. 2
\(^{1262}\) Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, Iraq: the PMF state [العراق: دولة “الشعبي”], 19 September 2022, url
\(^{1263}\) Al-Arab, The Popular Mobilization Forces occupy Journalist’s Syndicate in Diwaniya [الحشد الشعبي يحتل نقابة الصحفيين في الديوانية], 13 July 2023, url
\(^{1264}\) UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, url, para. 25
\(^{1266}\) EUAA, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, url, p. 83
Recent security trends

According to reports of the UN Secretary-General, several attacks on convoys of ‘Iraqi companies contracted to carry supplies for the international counter-Da’esh [ISIL] coalition’ were reported in a number of governorates, including Qadissiya, in 2023, causing no casualties. The attacks, which were carried out by Ashab Al-Kahr, the International Resistance, and the group Revenge for Muhandis, resumed in the first quarter of 2023 for the first time since August 2022.

Water shortages have reportedly led to conflicts between tribes in Qadissiya and Muthanna governorates.

Further relevant information on recent security trends could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 20 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Qadissiya governorate, of which 11 were coded as battles, 6 explosions/remote violence, and 3 incidents of violence against civilians. The majority of security incidents were documented in Al Diwaniya district. According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups and Iraqi police forces were involved in the majority of events coded as battles, and explosions/remote violence.

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1268 UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, url, para. 25
1270 UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022), S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, url, para. 17
1271 E-International Relations, Water Scarcity and Environmental Peacebuilding: A Lens on Southern Iraq, 18 May 2023, url, p. 2
1272 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), url
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Figure 37. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Qadissiya governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, the UCDP did not record any events resulting in fatalities in Qadissiya governorate.1273

Civilian casualties

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 1 civilian casualty in Qadissiya governorate.1274 For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Qadissiya governorate.1275

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war

At the end of 2022, there were reportedly no cluster munition-contaminated areas in Qadissiya governorate.1276 However, two cases of explosive remnants of war detonations were reported during the reference period, resulting in the death of a child and injuries to other civilians,1277 one in the Umm Al-Abbasiyat neighbourhood in the Al-Shafi’iya area1278 and the

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1273 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
1274 EUAA analysis based on UNAMI data. UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024
1275 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024
1276 Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, url, p. 61
1277 NINA, One child killed and five others injured by ERW explosion in Diwaniya [وفاة واصابة 7/6 اطفال بالانفجار احد المخلفات الحربية في الدوينية], 18 August 2023, url; NINA, Young man injured by ERW explosion in Diwaniya [اصابة شاب في المخلفات الحربية في الدوينية], 18 August 2023, url
1278 NINA, One child killed and five others injured by ERW explosion in Diwaniya [وفاة واصابة 7/6 اطفال بالانفجار احد المخلفات الحربية في الدوينية], 18 August 2023, url
other in the Al-Nouriya neighbourhood of the governorate. Further relevant information on explosive remnants of war could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

Conflict-induced displacement and return

IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), as of December 2023, did not document any displacements from Qadissiya governorate in other parts of the country or within Qadissiya governorate.

As of December 2023, no returns to Qadissiya governorate were documented by IOM.

2.17. Thi-Qar

Map 18: Thi-Qar governorate with district borders, district capitals and main roads, © United Nations.

General description of governorate

Thi-Qar (Dhi-Qar) governorate is located in southern Iraq and has borders with Wassit, Missan, Basrah, Muthanna, and Qadissiya governorates. The capital is Nasiriya (Nassriyah). The governorate is divided into five districts: Al-Jubayish (Al-Chibayish), Al-Nasiriya (Nassriyah), Al-Shatra, Suq Al-Shuyukh (Suq Al Shoyokh), and Al-Rifa’i (Al Rifai).

1279 NINA, Young man injured by ERW explosion in Diwaniya [انصيحة شاب بأفجار أحد المخلفات الحربية القديمة في الديوانية].
1280 Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, p. 1
1281 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024.
1282 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024.
1283 UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014.
For 2022, the Iraqi Central Statistical Organization (CSO) estimated the governorate’s population at 2,321,851.\(^{1285}\)

The majority of Thi-Qar’s population is Shia Arab. There is also a Sunni minority and there are communities of Marsh Arabs, and small Assyrian, Chaldean Christian, and Mandean communities.\(^{1286}\) Moreover, there was a presence of Black Iraqis\(^{1287}\) and Bidoon communities.\(^{1288}\) For further information on the ethno-religious composition and economy in Thi-Qar, please refer to section 2.17.1 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

### Armed actors’ presence and control

For information on the conflict background and the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to section 2.17.2 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

Shiite political forces with armed militias such as the rival groups of Muqtada Al-Sadr’s Saraya Al-Salam\(^{1289}\) and the Asa’ib Ahl Al-Haq (AAH) were present in Thi-Qar\(^{1290}\) and other southern Iraqi governorates, where they maintained their strongholds.\(^{1291}\) The PMF’s Kata’ib Sayyid Al-Shuhada (KSS) reportedly maintained an office in Suq Al-Shuyukh (Suq Al Shoyokh) district.\(^{1292}\) According to a January 2024 Shafaq News article, AAH previously had headquarters in the governorate’s Al-Rifa’i (Al Rifai) district.\(^{1293}\)

The ISF were also present in Thi-Qar governorate.\(^{1294}\) In February 2023, Al-Mirbad reported that the governorate’s police command had started the implementation of a broad security plan in Al-Shatra district with the aim of establishing the rule of law in the face of tribal conflicts and armed clashes.\(^{1295}\) In 2023, it was reported that the Iraqi army had transferred security responsibilities in Thi-Qar governorate to the police.\(^{1296}\) In January 2024, Shafaq News...
reported that the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior had announced that it would soon take over the security agenda in the governorate from the Ministry of Defence. 1297

According to the CEO of Peace Paradigms, Haidar Al-Ibrahimi, an expert on peacebuilding and tribal reconciliation who was interviewed by EUAA for an April 2023 report on tribes in Iraq, tribes in Thi-Qar and other parts of southern Iraq, ‘have become a key competitor to state’s security institutions’ and ‘are heavily polarized and supported by key armed actors’. 1298

In October 2023, the Berghof Foundation reported that tribal dynamics were salient in Al-Rifa’i (Al Rifai) district, where the tribes Bani Rikab and Al-Shuwaylat were the most prominent. 1299

According to a local official in Thi-Qar cited by Al-Araby Al-Jadeed in a May 2023 article, a significant number of persons involved in the governorate’s tribal conflicts were affiliated with factions of the PMF. 1300

Recent security trends

In July 2023, EPIC reported that Thi-Qar, like much of Iraq’s southern governorates, which were not affected by the ISIL incursion, was ‘relatively safe’. 1301

According to Middle East based researcher and analyst Haley Bobseine, who was consulted for an April 2023 EUAA report, there have been cases of temporary closure of schools as a result of tribal clashes because it could be dangerous for children to go to school or cross town. 1302

Water shortages have reportedly led to conflicts between tribes in Thi-Qar and Muthanna governorates. 1303

Clashes between tribes and tribal violence were reported in all the districts of the governorate, namely Al-Shatra, 1304 Al-Nasiriya, 1305 Suq Al-Shuyukh (Suq

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1297 Shafaq News, Iraqi Interior Ministry to take over security in Dhi Qar, Samarra, 7 January 2024, url
1298 EUAA, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, url, p. 83
1299 Berghof Foundation, PPO, Climate change effects on conflict dynamics in Iraq: Study of Makhmur, Tal Afar, and Al-Rifaí districts, 6 October 2023, url, p. 19
1300 Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, النزاعات العشائرية ... التهديد الأمني الأول في ذي قار العراقية [Tribal conflicts: the most important security threat Iraqi Thi-Qar], 6 May 2023, url
1301 EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, url
1302 EUAA, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, url, p. 82
1303 E-International Relations, Water Scarcity and Environmental Peacebuilding: A Lens on Southern Iraq, 18 May 2023, url, p. 2
1304 International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: February 2023 – March 2024, n.d., url; Shafaq News، "استخدمت فيه الهاونات.. قوة عسكرية كبيرة تدخل إصلاح ذي قار للسيطرة على نزاع عشائري" [Use of mortars: Large military force enters Islah district in Thi-Qar to control a tribal conflict], 26 September 2023, url; Shafaq News, "أعدم ضابط.. قائد شرطة ذي قار يقتحم معقل "آل رميض" جنوبي العراق [Officer killed using 'execution method': Thi Qar police chief storms Al-Rumayd stronghold in southern Iraq], 13 April 2023, url
Al Shoyokh, Al-Rifa’i (Al Rifai), and Al-Jubayish (Al Chibayish). Tribal clashes in the governorate were reported, for example, between the Atab and Hatem clans, between the Omar and Rumayd clans, between the Al-Awwad and Al-Sayed Taher clans, between the Hajam and Albu Ziyad clans, between members of the Bani Sa’id (Bani Saeed) clan and the Bani Rikab and Al-Shuwaylat tribes. Some of the clashes reportedly resulted in casualties.

Over the course of the reference period, sources reported recurrent tensions and clashes in the Al-Islah area of Al-Nasiriya district between the Omar and Rumayd clans. The ISF reportedly intervened and conducted several security operations in order to contain the...
security situation in light of these\textsuperscript{1396} and other tribal conflicts.\textsuperscript{1397} On March 4, 2024, authorities reportedly imposed an ‘indefinite’ curfew in Al-Islah following tribal clashes.\textsuperscript{1398}

According to the abovementioned Berghof Foundation report, mild tensions between the Bani Rikab and Al-Shuwaylat clans have escalated into clashes in recent years, creating an ‘atmosphere of instability and mistrust’. According to interviewees and focus groups consulted for the report, access to water was a driving force behind the conflicts. However, they indicated that these conflicts, which had increased in the previous years, had decreased in 2023 due to increased rainfall. They also indicated that such conflicts are usually ‘effectively and quickly resolved by tribal authorities, or security and administrative actors’.\textsuperscript{1399}

In the context of an escalation of hostilities between the Sadr movement and AAH in early 2024, the Nasiriya hospital reportedly became the scene of an armed conflict between the two factions.\textsuperscript{1400} According to an Al-Arab article, AAH forces attempted to enter the hospital and were prevented by Sadrist fighters, leading to an armed clash and the intervention of the ISF.\textsuperscript{1401}

Moreover, in the reference period, a KSS headquarters in Suq Al-Shuyukh (Suq Al Shoyokh) district\textsuperscript{1402} and a headquarters of a Sadrist faction in the city of Nasiriya were targeted by unknown gunmen, without causing any casualties.\textsuperscript{1403}

Furthermore, a number of attacks were carried out by unidentified perpetrators against civilians of certain profiles or against their houses or vehicles, including against a lawyer.\textsuperscript{1404}

\begin{thebibliography}{100}
\bibitem{1396} Al-Mirbad, [Security reinforcements arrive to control the tribal conflict in Thi-Qar], 4 March 2024, \url{NINA}.\nl
\bibitem{1397} NINA. [虻دة Sadr و Al-Arab, أصابات مختلفة في تجدد نزاع عشائري مسلح جنوبي ذي قار [Various injuries in renewed armed tribal conflict south of Thi-Qar], 30 November 2023, \url{Shafaq News}.\nl
\bibitem{1398} Al-Mirbad, [Use of mortars: Large military force enters Islah district in Thi-Qar to control a tribal conflict], 26 September 2023, \url{url}.\nl
\bibitem{1399} Al-Mirbad, [Use of Force: Security forces stop violent tribal clash in Thi-Qar], 20 May 2023, \url{url}.\nl
\bibitem{1400} Crisis24, [Iraq: Officials implement indefinite curfew in Al Islah District, Dhi Qar Governorate, March 4, 4 March 2024, \url{url}.\nl
\bibitem{1401} Berghof Foundation, PPO, [Climate change effects on conflict dynamics in Iraq: Study of Makhmur, Tal Afar, and Al-Rfai districts, 6 October 2023, \url{url}, pp. 20-21.\nl
\bibitem{1402} Shafaq News, [نشر سلطات أممية غير رسمية. حصيلة جديدة لأحداث اشتباكات "العصائب والتيار" في ذي قار [Deployment of unofficial security checks: new result of clashes between the Asa’ib and the Tayyar in Thi-Qar], 21 January 2024, \url{url}.\nl
\bibitem{1403} Al-Arab, [انفجار مركبة تعود لمحامٍ وسط ذي قار [An explosion shakes Sadrist ‘Friday Prayer’ site in Dhi Qar], 17 March 2023, \url{url}.\nl
\bibitem{1404} Al-Mirbad, [vehicle of lawyer was burned in the centre of Nasiriya], 22 November 2023, \url{url}.\nl
\end{thebibliography}
the leader of a sports club,1325 a cashier,1326 a supporter of a local election candidate,1327 a human resources leader of the education department of Al-Shatra district,1328 and a tribal leader,1329 some of which caused civilian casualties.1330

In November 2023, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that drug criminality and drug-related violence were a visible issue in Thi-Qar governorate.1331

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 163 security incidents recorded by ACLED in Thi-Qar governorate, of which 78 were coded as battles, 38 explosions/remote violence, and 47 incidents of violence against civilians.1332 The majority of security incidents were documented in Al-Nasiriya district. According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups and unidentified tribal militias were involved in the majority of events coded as battles and violence against civilians.

1325 Al-Mirbad, استهداف مركزية "رئيس نادي رياضي" بعبوة صوتية وسط الناصرية [Car of ‘leader of sports club’ attacked with sonic device in the centre of Nasiriya], 19 February 2024, url
1326 Al-Mirbad, استهداف منزل شخص برمانة صوتية وسط الناصرية [Individual’s home attacked by sonic weapon in centre of Nasiriya], 28 December 2023, url
1327 Shafaq News, ذي قار تمسي على عبوتين ناسفتين وعجلة محترقة [Destruction in Thi-Qar due to two explosive devices and burning tire], 17 November 2023, url
1328 Al-Mirbad, مقتل شخص يعمل موظفا في قضاء الشطرة شمال ذي قار [Employee killed in Al-Shatra district north of Thi-Qar], 30 April 2023, url
1329 Al-Mirbad, استهداف منزل شيخ برمانة صوتية شمال ذي قار [House of tribal leader attacked with sonic weapon in Thi-Qar], 25 October 2023, url
1330 Al-Mirbad, مقتل شخص يعمل موظفا في قضاء الشطرة شمال ذي قار [Employee killed in Al-Shatra district north of Thi-Qar], 30 April 2023, url; Al-Mirbad, مقتل شخص يعمل روحانيا وسط الناصرية [Spiritual worker killed in the centre of Nasiriya], 9 December 2023, url
1331 Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen ambtsbericht Irak [Country report Iraq], November 2023, url, p. 17
1332 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), url
Figure 38. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Thi-Qar governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP recorded one event leading to fatalities in Thi-Qar governorate.  

**Civilian casualties**

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 2 civilian casualties in Thi-Qar governorate.

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Thi-Qar governorate.

**Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war**

In the context of the above-mentioned escalation of hostilities between the Sadr movement and AAH in February 2024, the Nasiriya hospital reportedly became the scene of an armed conflict. Further information on conflict-related infrastructure damage in the reference period could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

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1333 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

1334 UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

1335 EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

1336 Al-Arab. الأمن في مدن عراقية رهين حالة الدعاء بين مفدى الصدر وقبص الخزاعي [The security in Iraqi cities depends on hostilities between Muqtada Al-Sadr and Qais Al-Khazali], 6 February 2024, url; Shafaq News. اشتباك مسلح بين "العصائب والتيار" في محيط مستشفى الناصرية [Armed clash between AAH and the Sadrist movement in the surroundings of the Nasiriya hospital and intervention of security forces], 21 January 2021, url
As of the end of 2022, around 44,887,183 square metres of Thi-Qar governorate’s area were reported to be cluster munition-contaminated. According to the 2023 Mine Action Review, Thi-Qar was one of the three most cluster munition-contaminated governorates in Iraq. In the reference period, incidents of civilian casualties in Thi-Qar caused by explosions of ERW were reported, for example in Nasiriya city and in the Abu Ghar area of Thi Qar’s southern desert region. Further relevant information on explosive remnants of war could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

Conflict-induced displacement and return

As of December 2023, IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) documented no displacements from Thi-Qar governorate to other parts of the country or within Thi-Qar governorate.

As of December 2023, IOM has not documented any returns to Thi-Qar governorate.

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1337 Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, url, p. 61
1338 Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023, 1 August 2023, url, p. 66
1339 Shafaq News, Explosion kills a ‘Bedouin’ and injures another person in southern Iraq, 16 July 2023, url; Al-Mirbad, اصابة امرأة وطفلتها بانفجار لغم أرضي في بادية ذي قار [Woman and her child injured in landmine explosion in Thi-Qar desert], 9 January 2023, url
1340 Shafaq News, Explosion kills a ‘Bedouin’ and injures another person in southern Iraq, 16 July 2023, url
1341 Al-Mirbad, اصابة امرأة وطفلتها بانفجار لغم أرضي في بادية ذي قار [Woman and her child injured in landmine explosion in Thi-Qar desert], 9 January 2023, url
1342 Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, url, p. 1
1343 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, url
1344 IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, url
2.18. Wassit

Wassit (Wasit) shares an international border with Iran to the east. It borders the governorates Diyala, Baghdad, Babil, Qadissiya, Thi-Qar and Missan. According to more recent sources, the governorate is divided into five districts, while an older source lists the following six districts: Al-Aziziya (Al-Azezia), Badra, Al-Kut, Al-Suwaira, Al-Namaniya (Al-Numaniyah), and Al-Hai (Al-Hay) – with Al-Azezia treated as a sub-district of Al-Suwaira when five districts are listed. The capital of the governorate is Kut.

For 2022, the Iraqi Central Statistical Organization (CSO) estimated the governorate’s population at 1,527,911.

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1345 UNJAU, Iraq District Map, 29 January 2014, [url]
1346 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Wassit Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url]
1348 UN IAU, Wassit Governorate Profile [Map], November 2010, [url], p. 1
1349 UNOCHA and iMMAP, Iraq: Wassit Governorate Reference Map 2020, 5 May 2020, [url]
1350 Iraq, CSO, المجموعة الإحصائية لـ2022-2023 للدبلوم الثاني [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url], p. 8
The majority of Wassit’s inhabitants are Shia Arab, but there were also communities of Feyli Kurds in Badra district and east of the capital Kut. Bidoon communities, who fled Kuwait following Iraq’s invasion in 1990 were also reported to exist.

For information on the economy in Wassit, please refer to section 2.18.1 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

**Armed actors’ presence and control**

For information on the conflict background and the presence and areas of control of armed actors as of January 2022, please refer to sections 2.18.2 and 2.18.3 of the previous EUAA COI report: Iraq Security Situation (January 2022).

In 2023, the police force took over responsibility over the security of the governorate from the Iraqi army.

According to an article by Al-Mirbad, the PMF’s Al-Abbas Combat Division was present in Wassit governorate. Furthermore, Shafaq News reported that the PMF’s Saraya Al-Salam had a headquarters in the centre of Al-Kut city and that the PMF’s Harakat Al-Nujaba (HAN) had a camp in Taj Al-Din sub-district of the governorate.

Further information on the presence and areas of control of armed actors in Wassit governorate in the reference period could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

**Recent security trends**

According to EPIC, Wassit governorate was reactively calm as it was not affected by the ISIL occupation. In the reference period, sporadic security-related incidents were reported in Wassit governorate. These included sporadic tribal clashes, resulting in casualties, for

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1351 EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](https://example.com)
1352 UNHCR, Statelessness and Risks of Statelessness in Iraq: Faili Kurd and Bidoon Communities, September 2022, [url](https://example.com), pp. 10, 12, 18
1353 EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](https://example.com)
1354 UNHCR, Statelessness and Risks of Statelessness in Iraq: Faili Kurd and Bidoon Communities, September 2022, [url](https://example.com), p. 11; Stateless Journey, Statelessness in Iraq, November 2019, [url](https://example.com), p. 2
1355 New Arab (The), Transfer of security responsibilities from Iraq’s army to local police stalled by challenges, 18 September 2023, [url](https://example.com)
1356 TWI, The al-Abbas Combat Division Model: Reducing Iranian Influence in Iraq’s Security Forces, 22 August 2017, [url](https://example.com)
1357 Al-Mirbad, فرقة العباس القتالية تعلن عن تنفيذ مشاريع للسكن في واسط [Al-Abbas Combat Division announces implementation of housing projects in Wasit], 13 June 2023, [url](https://example.com)
1358 Shafaq News, اشتباك وتبادل إطلاق نار بين مجموعة من جماعة السلام وقوة أمنية في واسط [Clashes and exchange of fire between Saraya Al-Salam and ISF in Wasit], 14 January 2024, [url](https://example.com)
1359 Shafaq News, قصف يطال معركة ‘النجباء’ في واسط والبنتاغون يتبنى شن 3 هجمات على ‘كتائب حزب الله’ في العراق [Airstrike targets ‘Al-Nujaba’ camp in Wasit, and the Pentagon claims launching 3 attacks on ‘Kata’ib Hezbollah’ in Iraq], 26 December 2023, [url](https://example.com)
1356 EPIC, ISHM Reference Guide, last revision July 2023, [url](https://example.com)
example in example in and around the city of Kut, and in the governorate's Sayyid Al-Shuhada sub-district. A clash between Saraya Al-Salam and the ISF was also reported in the city of Kut. It was reportedly caused when a member of the security forces attempted to search the vehicle of Saraya Al-Salam members at a checkpoint. In one incident, a HAN camp in Taj Al-Din sub-district was targeted by a drone strike carried out by unknown perpetrators.

Further relevant information on recent security trends could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

**Security incidents**

During the reporting period (1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024), 16 security incidents were recorded by ACLED in Wasit governorate, of which 7 were coded as battles, 3 explosions/remote violence, and 6 incidents of violence against civilians. The majority of security incidents were documented in Al Kut district. According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups were involved in the majority of events coded as battles and violence against civilians.

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1367 EUAA analysis based on ACLED data. ACLED, Data Export Tool, Middle East (19 April 2024), [url](https://www.acled.org/data-export-tool)
Figure 39. Security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Wassit governorate between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024. Breakdown by district based on ACLED data.

For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any events resulting in fatalities in Wassit governorate.\textsuperscript{1367}

**Civilian casualties**

During the reporting period, UNAMI recorded 2 civilian casualties in Wassit governorate.\textsuperscript{1368} For the period between 1 February 2023 and 31 March 2024, UCDP did not record any civilian deaths in Wassit governorate.\textsuperscript{1369}

**Conflict-related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war**

Information on conflict-related infrastructure damage in the reference period could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

As of the end of 2022, Mine Action review had not documented any cluster munition contaminated area in Wassit governorate.\textsuperscript{1370} However, in January 2023, Al-Mirbad reported that a member of the security forces was injured in Zurbatiyah city by an ERW explosion.\textsuperscript{1371}

\textsuperscript{1367} EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

\textsuperscript{1368} UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 1 April 2024

\textsuperscript{1369} EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 February 2023 to 31 March 2024 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 22 March 2024 & 22 April 2024

\textsuperscript{1370} Mine Action Review, Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023 [Table 1], 1 August 2023, url, p. 61

\textsuperscript{1371} Al-Mirbad, إصابة مثبتة أمني بالفجأة لغم حربي في واسط [Member of security forces was injured by a mine explosion in Wassit], 12 January 2023, url
Conflict-induced displacement and return

As of December 2023, IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)\footnote{1372} did not document any displacement from Wassit governorate to other parts of the country or within Wassit governorate.\footnote{1373}

As of December 2023, IOM has not documented any returns to Wassit governorate.\footnote{1374}

\footnote{1372} Please note that IOM does not specify the drivers for these displacements, which, among others, include conflict and insecurity. However, climate-induced displacements are not included. IOM DTM, Climate-Induced Displacement – Central and Southern Iraq (Data Collection Period: 1 – 15 June 2023), 15 December 2023, \url{url}, p. 1
\footnote{1373} IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, IDP 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, \url{url}
\footnote{1374} IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Master List Datasets, Returnee 131 [Excel File; Sheet: Summary], January 2024, \url{url}
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Annex 2: Terms of Reference

The information contained in this report will inform the update of the chapters on the assessment of the application of Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive. The reference period for the report should be **1 February 2023 – 31 March 2024**.

- **General description of the security situation**
  - Overview of conflict and recent security trends
  - Political developments
  - International involvement
  - Armed actors
    - Brief description and capacity
    - Presence and areas of control/influence of the different actors
  - Impact of the security situation on civilian population
    - Security incidents
      - Number and type of security incidents
      - Type of weapons and tactics used
    - Civilian casualties
    - Conflict related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war
    - Conflict-induced displacement and return

- **Security situation and conflict impact on civilians by governorates**
  - General description of governorate
  - Actors involved in conflict during the reference period and control/presence
  - Recent security trends
  - Security incidents
  - Civilian casualties
  - Conflict related infrastructure damage and explosive remnants of war
  - Conflict-induced displacement and return