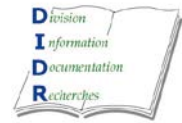


IRAQ



10 november 2017



The Security situation in Baghdad Governorate

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Abstract

The level of violence in Baghdad has gradually declined since 2016. There has been a decrease in IS activity following Iraqi troops' advances in Northern Iraq, even though the organization continues to launch regular attacks against military and civilian targets, particularly but not exclusively in Shia neighbourhoods. Sunni inhabitants come under the threats of Shia militias, including abductions and killings.

Résumé

Le niveau de la violence a progressivement diminué à Bagdad depuis 2016. L'activité de l'Etat islamique s'est réduite au fur et à mesure de l'avance des troupes irakiennes au nord de l'Irak, même si l'organisation continue de mener des attaques régulières contre des cibles militaires et civiles, particulièrement mais pas exclusivement dans les quartiers chiites. Par ailleurs, les habitants sunnites sont exposés aux exactions des milices chiites, en particulier aux enlèvements et exécutions extra-judiciaires.

Nota: The translation of sources in foreign languages is provided by the Information, Documentation and Research Division.

1. Background information

The governorate of Baghdad is the smallest governorate of Iraq and the most densely populated, with a population of 7,180,889 people¹. The security of the governorate is controlled both by the Baghdad Operations Command, which draws its members from the army, the police and the intelligence services, and Shia militias, which are described as growing stronger². The Baghdad Operations Command holds a grip on the Capital, with regular security checkpoints on the main roads, whereas Shia militias maintain an in-depth surveillance of the city³.

The majority of the inhabitants of Baghdad are Shia. In the past, the capital included many mixed Shia, Sunni and Christian neighbourhoods, but the civil war of 2006-2007 changed the demographic distribution in the city, reducing the social mix and leading to the formation of increasingly exclusive neighbourhoods. Many Sunnis fled the city to escape the threat of Shia militias. According to Michael Izady, a cartographer and Near-East specialist, by the end of 2008, "no more than 10-15% of the city's population was still Sunni".⁴

2. Types of threats

The level of violence in Baghdad has progressively declined over the past year. In 2016, the Governorate still registered the highest number of casualties across Iraq, particularly during the periods between May and June 2016, and between August and November 2016, during which spikes were recorded due to IS offensives⁵. Nevertheless, the security in the Governorate improved when the Mosul battle began, to the point that the Governorate recorded in September 2017 the lowest number of attacks per day in years⁶. Whereas Joel Wing, an Iraq analyst who runs the blog "Musings on Iraq", recorded an average of 11,6 attacks per day in Baghdad in January 2016⁷, those numbers decreased to 3 in September 2017⁸. The statistics recorded by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) show the same general trend: whereas the number of civilians killed in Baghdad Governorate reached 299 in January 2016⁹, it decreased to 22 in June 2017¹⁰, before increasing slightly to 37 in September 2017¹¹. This security improvement led the Security forces to take down blast barriers and checkpoints in certain sections of central Baghdad¹².

The character of the violence is mainly attributed to terror attacks carried out by IS, but also acts of violence and assaults carried out by Shia militias, which are often comprised of abductions and killings.

¹ Statistics of the Iraqi Ministry of Planning, mentioned in United Kingdom, Home Office, "Iraq: Security and humanitarian situation", March 2017

² HABIB Mustafa, "Baghdad's legal gangs? As Iraqi police lose control of streets, militias take over", *Niqash*, 19/01/2017

³ HABIB Mustafa, "Baghdad's legal gangs? As Iraqi police lose control of streets, militias take over", *Niqash*, 19/01/2017; Amnesty International, "Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq", 14/10/2014

⁴ IZADY Michael, "Baghdad: Ethnic composition in 2015", 2015

⁵ *Musings on Iraq*, "24,091 reported dead and 39,205 wounded in Iraq in 2016", 02/01/2017

⁶ *Musings on Iraq*, "728 Dead and 549 wounded In September 2017 in Iraq", 04/10/2017

⁷ *Musings on Iraq*, "3,230 dead, 1,128 wounded in Iraq in June 2017", 08/07/2017

⁸ *Musings on Iraq*, "728 Dead and 549 wounded In September 2017 in Iraq", 04/10/2017

⁹ UNAMI, "UN casualty figures for Iraq for the month of January 2016", 01/02/2016

¹⁰ UNAMI, "UN casualty figures for Iraq for the month of June 2017", 02/07/2017

¹¹ UNAMI, "UN casualty figures for Iraq for the month of September 2017", 01/10/2017

¹² *Musings on Iraq*, "Iraq security trends Jan 2016-Apr 2017", 10/05/2017

1.1. IS attacks

IS launches regular terrorist attacks against military targets such as checkpoints and civilian targets in the Baghdad Belt and in the city itself, particularly but not exclusively in Shia neighbourhoods¹³.

IS attacks have followed the same general trend of violence in Baghdad since 2016.¹⁴ 2016 has been characterized by large scale offensives and spectacular attacks, particularly between April and May 2016, during which IS launched its spring offensive, that coincided with the Shia pilgrimage of Imam Musa al-Kadhim¹⁵, between July and October 2016 and between December 2016 and January 2017. On July 3rd 2016, IS detonated a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (SVBIED) in Karradah, a mixed neighbourhood of central Baghdad home to a Shia majority, resulting in the second deadliest attack in Iraq since 2003, with a total of 324 people killed¹⁶. Those spectacular attacks aimed at diverting the Iraqi forces, which were in the midst of their offensives in Anbar and Ninewa, undermining the image of the Government, and staying in the headlines despite IS's setbacks on the field¹⁷.

However, there has been a progressive decrease in IS activity in Baghdad following Iraqi troops advances in Northern Iraq. According to the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), not only has IS been facing difficulties in coordinating attacks throughout Iraq because of its losses in the North, which force it to transform "from a governing into a guerrilla style organization", but the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) might also have been improving their ability to thwart SVBIED and vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) attacks¹⁸. This tended to force IS to resort more to suicide-vests and improvised explosive device (IED) attacks, which are nonetheless a real driver of casualties¹⁹. According to several sources however, IS still has sleeper cells in the north and the south of the Baghdad Belt, which are connected to networks in Anbar, Diyala and Salaheddin Governorates, and from which it could launch attacks²⁰.

The neighbourhoods that have been the most and the least targeted by IS attacks over the past year are listed at the end of the chapter.

1.2. Threats posed by Shia militias

The other serious threats existing in Baghdad Governorate are the ones posed by Shia militias, including harassment, abductions and killings. Those threats increased dramatically at the end of 2013 and reached a peak in 2015²¹, to such an extent that Baghdad inhabitants said they feared Shia militias more than jihadists at that time²². These killings often showed the same pattern: the victims were found with a gunshot

¹³ See the "Iraq situation reports" published by the Institute for the Study of War; *Musings on Iraq*, "1,958 killed and 1,261 wounded in Iraq in August 2017", 03/09/2017

¹⁴ *Musings on Iraq*, "24,091 reported dead and 39,205 wounded in Iraq in 2016", 02/01/2017

¹⁵ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: April 12 - 25, 2016", 25/04/2016

¹⁶ *Musings on Iraq*, "Violence in Iraq, July 2016", 03/08/2016

¹⁷ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: December 21, 2016 - January 5, 2017", 05/01/2017; *Musings on Iraq*, "Violence in Iraq, August 2016", 05/09/2016; *Musings on Iraq*, "Violence in Iraq, March 2016", 05/04/2016

¹⁸ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: February 17-28, 2017", 28/02/2017

¹⁹ Institute for the Study of War, "ISIS's explosive attacks in the greater Baghdad Area: April 4-May 11, 2016", 11/05/2016

²⁰ *Musings on Iraq*, "2,677 killed and 1,742 wounded in Iraq April 2017", 10/05/2017;

²¹ UNAMI, "Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 November 2015 – 30 September 2016", 30/12/2016; MAMOUN Abdelhak, "Internal intelligence arrests kidnapper gang in eastern Baghdad", *Iraqi News*, 03/01/2015

²² BARTHE Benjamin, "A Bagdad, 'les sunnites ont plus peur des milices chiites que des djihadistes'", *Le Monde*, 08/07/2014

wound in the head and with their hands cuffed behind their back.²³ Little updated information has been found on the evolution of these threats, but according to Belkis Wille, a Senior Iraq Researcher working with Human Rights Watch (HRW), Shia militias continue to abduct, detain and harass people at will in Baghdad²⁴. More generally, Shia militias' influence is described by the media to be growing in the capital²⁵.

1.2.1. Harassment

According to sources dating back from 2014, Sunni inhabitants of Baghdad have been harassed by Shia militias and received death threats coercing them to live their neighbourhoods²⁶. A senior official interviewed by *Mint Press* recognized that "some Shia militiamen were using their membership in the 'popular mobilization' forces as a cover to intimidate Baghdad's Sunnis"²⁷. Some Sunni residents and community leaders see these acts as a strategy to turn Baghdad into a purely Shia city²⁸. This strategy tends to be effective, as a 2016 IOM study showed that many IDPs who fled the fighting in the Baghdad Belt are afraid to return because of Shia militias' harassment.²⁹

1.2.2. Abductions

According to sources dating back to 2014 and 2016, members of Shia militias have been taking advantage of the context of lawlessness in Baghdad to abduct people and extort money from their family³⁰. Anyone can be targeted by these abductions, especially if they are known for being wealthy. However, according to a government official interviewed by Amnesty International, Shia militias tend more to abduct Sunnis as they "can easily be labelled as terrorists and nobody is going to do anything about it".³¹ In many cases documented by the organization, the victims were killed even though the families paid the demanded ransom.³²

1.2.3. Targeted killings

According to a 2014 report by Amnesty International, Shia militias have also been taking advantage of their impunity to execute persons suspected of being terrorists. These executions often take place at checkpoints, where Sunnis who are of a fighting age and come from areas known for harbouring IS cells are easily suspected³³. Targeted executions of suspected terrorists have also been carried out based on intelligence information and denunciations, which are often biased³⁴.

According a 2014 report by Amnesty International, the Shia militia "Asaib Ahl Al-Haq" is the main group responsible for these acts, although it is not the only one³⁵. This

²³ Amnesty International, "Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq", 14/10/2014; Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014

²⁴ WILLE Belkis, "Shia militias in Baghdad", 12/10/2017

²⁵ HABIB Mustafa, "Baghdad's legal gangs? As Iraqi police lose control of streets, militias take over", *Niqash*, 19/01/2017

²⁶ *NBC News*, "Baghdad's Sunni Muslims fear repeat of Iraq's darkest days", 07/07/2014; Amnesty International, "Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq", 14/10/2014; Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014

²⁷ HENDAWI Hamza, "Despite bombings by Sunni extremists, Iraqi Shias use holy month as show of force", *Mint Press*, 15/11/2014

²⁸ Amnesty International, "Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq", 14/10/2014; HENDAWI Hamza, "Despite bombings by Sunni extremists, Iraqi Shias use holy month as show of force", *Mint Press*, 15/11/2014

²⁹ IOM, "Obstacles to return in retaken areas of Iraq", March 2017, p. 58-60

³⁰ Amnesty International, "Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq", 14/10/2014

³¹ Amnesty International, "Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq", 14/10/2014, p. 8-9

³² Amnesty International, "Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq", 14/10/2014

³³ Amnesty International, "Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq", 14/10/2014

³⁴ WILLE Belkis, "Shia militias in Baghdad", 12/10/2017 [contacted by email]

³⁵ Amnesty International, "Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq", 14/10/2014; Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014;

sectarian militia is described as the most powerful in Baghdad, to such an extent that it acts with impunity³⁶.

1.2.4. Lack of protection from official security forces

Faced with these threats, Baghdad's inhabitants are reluctant to have recourse to the police³⁷, as Shia militias usually coordinate with the latter³⁸ and are believed to be "authorized to kill"³⁹. Others claim that militias have such influence that the police cannot hold them accountable for any violations⁴⁰. Locals even fear that if they file a complaint, the militias will learn about it and take revenge on their family.⁴¹ Hence, the victims' relatives are often afraid to go to the morgues to look for a missing relative.⁴²

Instead of resorting to public services, Baghdad's inhabitants have developed coping strategies, such as obtaining fake IDs with a Shia name, in order to go through the city's checkpoints, or hanging Shia signs on their house during Shia religious holidays to avoid attention⁴³.

1.2.5. Clashes involving Shia militias

Finally, Shia residents have expressed fear that conflict might burst between different Shia militias in Baghdad. Members of certain militias said they are afraid for instance that the militia which controls their neighbourhood would take revenge on them for acts committed by their own militia⁴⁴. Clashes have already broken out in certain neighbourhoods⁴⁵.

Conflicts have also already broken out between Shia militias, especially Asaib Ahl Al-Haq, and the police, such as in Zafaraniya neighbourhood in September 2016⁴⁶ or on Palestine Street in May 2017, leaving two policemen killed⁴⁷.

The neighbourhoods that are the most and the least exposed to Shia militias' threats are listed below.

³⁶ Amnesty International, "Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq", 14/10/2014; Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014

³⁷ Amnesty International, "Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq", 14/10/2014; Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014

³⁸ HABIB Mustafa, "Baghdad's legal gangs? As Iraqi police lose control of streets, militias take over", *Niqash*, 19/01/2017

³⁹ Amnesty International, "Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq", 14/10/2014; Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014

⁴⁰ HABIB Mustafa, "Baghdad's legal gangs? As Iraqi police lose control of streets, militias take over", *Niqash*, 19/01/2017

⁴¹ Amnesty International, "Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq", 14/10/2014; Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014

⁴² Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014

⁴³ HENDAWI Hamza, "Despite bombings by Sunni extremists, Iraqi Shias use holy month as show of force", *Mint Press*, 15/11/2014; *NBC News*, "Baghdad's Sunni Muslims fear repeat of Iraq's darkest days", 07/07/2014

⁴⁴ HABIB Mustafa, "Baghdad's legal gangs? As Iraqi police lose control of streets, militias take over", *Niqash*, 19/01/2017; *Niqash*, "Common Enemies: Baghdad Locals Fear Shiite-On-Shiite Violence As Alliance Fractures", 19/05/2016

⁴⁵ SADAH Ali Abel, "Sadr Reconsiders Political Role, Mahdi Army", *Al Monitor*, 28/08/2013

⁴⁶ HABIB Mustafa, "Baghdad's legal gangs? As Iraqi police lose control of streets, militias take over", *Niqash*, 19/01/2017; MOSTAFA Mohamed, "At least 2 policemen killed as police clash with Shia militia in Baghdad", *Iraqi News*, 19/05/2017

⁴⁷ MOSTAFA Mohamed, "At least 2 policemen killed as police clash with Shia militia in Baghdad", *Iraqi News*, 19/05/2017

2. Threats by neighbourhood

2.1. Baghdad City

According to a 2010 map by the Humanitarian Information Centre for Iraq, which belongs to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Baghdad City has 9 districts: Adhamiyah, Thawra (where Sadr City is located), Nissan, Rusafa, Karradah, Karkh, Khadahmiyah, Mansour and Rasheed. These districts comprise a total of 89 neighbourhoods⁴⁸. Other sources however differ on the administrative division of Baghdad. The following chapter will focus on the neighbourhoods where the highest number of threats has been reported⁴⁹. The list of attacks is not exhaustive.

2.1.1. Adhamiyah District

Adhamiyah is originally a Sunni shrine town. Today however, the district mainly harbours Shia neighbourhoods on the East of the Army canal, as well as a Sunni enclave between the Tigris River and the West side of the Army Canal⁵⁰.

In the eastern part of Adhamiyah District is the Shia neighbourhood of **Shaab**. The neighbourhood has been the scene of many spectacular attacks staged by IS against civilian targets, including in May, July and October 2016. Some of these involved a VBIED⁵¹. In 2014, a HRW report noted that Asaib Ahl al-Haq has a "heavy presence" in the neighbourhood. Several abductions of Sunnis were reported during that year⁵².

Next to Shaab Neighbourhood, in the eastern part of Adhamiyah, is the neighbourhood of **Ur**, which is also predominantly Shia⁵³. Ur was targeted by at least two IS attacks in September and November 2016, one of them involving a VBIED⁵⁴.

2.1.2. Thawra District

Thawra is a Shia district⁵⁵ that is mainly controlled by the Sadrists, even though other militias also have some presence⁵⁶.

Sadr City (also known as Thawra City) is a Shia neighbourhood⁵⁷ in Thawra District that has been one of the prime targets of IS attacks, even though it is heavily controlled by the Sadrists. Many of these attacks involved VBIEDs⁵⁸. Most recently, on August 28th 2017, a car bomb hit a busy market of the neighbourhood, killing 12 people⁵⁹.

⁴⁸ HIC, "Baghdad neighbourhood map", February 2010 in WEIDMANN Nils and IDEAN Salehyan, "Violence and Ethnic Segregation: A Computational Model Applied to Baghdad", 2013

⁴⁹ See the Institute for the Study of War's weekly reports

⁵⁰ IZADY Michael, "Baghdad: Ethnic composition in 2015", 2015; Institute for the Study of War, "Adhamiyah"

⁵¹ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: May 11-24, 2016", 24/05/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: May 24 - June 1, 2016", 01/06/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: July 13-18, 2016", 18/07/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: October 12-17, 2016", 17/10/2016.

⁵² Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014

⁵³ IZADY Michael, "Baghdad: Ethnic composition in 2015", 2015

⁵⁴ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: September 20 - October 3, 2016", 03/10/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: November 18-30, 2016", 30/11/2016.

⁵⁵ IZADY Michael, "Baghdad: Ethnic composition in 2015", 2015; Institute for the Study of War, "Sadr City"

⁵⁶ *Niqash*, "Common Enemies: Baghdad Locals Fear Shiite-On-Shiite Violence As Alliance Fractures", 19/05/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Sadr City"

⁵⁷ IZADY Michael, "Baghdad: Ethnic composition in 2015", 2015

⁵⁸ Institute for the Study of War, "ISIS's explosive attacks in the greater Baghdad Area: April 4-May 11, 2016", 11/05/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: December 1-6, 2016", 06/12/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: December 21, 2016 - January 5, 2017", 05/01/2017;

⁵⁹ *Musings on Iraq*, "1,958 killed and 1,261 wounded In Iraq in August 2017", 03/09/2017

Ishbiliya (also known as Jamaliya) is another Shia neighbourhood⁶⁰ located in Thawra District that has been targeted by IS attacks, notably in November 2016 and January 2017, involving VBIEDs⁶¹.

2.1.3. Nissan District (also known as New Baghdad or Baghdad al-Jadida)

Nissan District is predominantly Shia⁶² and has been the one of the districts worst hit by IS attacks over the past year. All through 2016 and up to May 2017, all neighbourhoods of the district have been regularly targeted by deadly attacks, most of them involving a VBIED⁶³. The neighbourhoods of **Ghadeer**⁶⁴, **Habibiya**⁶⁵, **Baladiyat**⁶⁶, **Ameen**⁶⁷, **Mashtal**⁶⁸ and **Obaydi**⁶⁹ have been especially badly hit.

2.1.4. Rusafa District

Rusafa District has a Shia majority but also encompasses a Sunni enclave (Fadhil neighborhood) in the North of the district⁷⁰. The district has been targeted by a series of IS attacks in January and February 2017, most of them involving VBIED. More specifically, the neighborhoods of **Nile**⁷¹, **Shorjah**⁷², **Sinak**⁷³, **Al-Rasheed**⁷⁴ and **Nahda (also known as Camp Gaylani)**⁷⁵ have been hit over the past year.

2.1.5. Karradah District

Karradah is a mixed district, encompassing mixed and Christian neighborhoods in the North-East and Shia neighborhoods in the West and in the South (Zafaraniya neighborhood)⁷⁶. According to *Niqash*, Karradah is controlled by the Badr Organization⁷⁷.

The district has been hit by several IS attacks over the past year. In April 2017 and May 2017, two VBIEDs hit **Inner Karradah**⁷⁸ and an ice cream shop on Karradah Kharidge Road on **Karradah Peninsula** respectively⁷⁹.

Zafaraniya, a Shia neighborhood located in Karradah District, was attacked on at least two occasions last year⁸⁰. Abductions and killings of Sunni residents have also been reported in this neighborhood in 2014⁸¹.

⁶⁰ IZADY Michael, "Baghdad: Ethnic composition in 2015", 2015

⁶¹ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: November 18-30, 2016", 30/11/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: January 6-11, 2017", 11/01/2017

⁶² IZADY Michael, "Baghdad: Ethnic composition in 2015", 2015; Institute for the Study of War, "9 Nissan"

⁶³ See the "Iraq situation reports" published by the Institute for the Study of War at the following dates: 25/04/2016, 11/05/2016, 13/06/2016, 03/10/2016, 11/10/2016, 08/11/2016, 05/01/2017, 11/01/2017, 30/11/2016, 16/02/2017, 20/05/2017;

⁶⁴ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: April 12 - 25, 2016", 25/04/2016

⁶⁵ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: February 11-16, 2017", 16/02/2017

⁶⁶ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: January 6-11, 2017", 11/01/2017

⁶⁷ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: November 2-8, 2016", 08/11/2016

⁶⁸ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: November 18-30, 2016", 30/11/2016

⁶⁹ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: December 21, 2016 - January 5, 2017", 05/01/2017

⁷⁰ IZADY Michael, "Baghdad: Ethnic composition in 2015", 2015; Institute for the Study of War, "Rusafa"

⁷¹ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: September 7-19, 2016", 19/09/2016

⁷² Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: January 25 - February 1, 2017", 01/02/2017

⁷³ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: December 21, 2016 - January 5, 2017", 05/01/2017

⁷⁴ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: January 25 - February 1, 2017", 01/02/2017

⁷⁵ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: December 21, 2016 - January 5, 2017", 05/01/2017; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: January 12-24, 2017", 24/01/2017

⁷⁶ IZADY Michael, "Baghdad: Ethnic composition in 2015", 2015; Institute for the Study of War, "Karradah"

⁷⁷ *Niqash*, "Common Enemies: Baghdad Locals Fear Shiite-On-Shiite Violence As Alliance Fractures", 19/05/2016

⁷⁸ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: August 31-September 6, 2016", 06/09/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: April 21 - May 5, 2017", 05/05/2017.

⁷⁹ *Al Sumaria*, "قتيلان و 4 جرحى في حصيلة أولية لانفجار مفخخة وسط بغداد" ["2 morts et 4 blessés dans le premier bilan de l'explosion d'une bombe dans le centre de Baghdad"], 30/05/2017

Jadariya, a Shia neighborhood where Baghdad University is located, was hit by a suicide-vest attack in October 2016⁸².

2.1.6. Karkh District

Karkh is a mixed district, encompassing Shia, Christian and Sunni neighborhoods⁸³. It also hosts the Green Zone, where Government institutions and several embassies are located⁸⁴. This district is the most secured in Baghdad, even though an IS attack hit the area in September 2016⁸⁵.

2.1.7. Khadhamiyah District

Khadhamiyah is originally a Shia shrine town, located in the Northwest of Baghdad, and mainly hosts Shia residents⁸⁶. The district has been regularly hit by IS attacks over the past year⁸⁷. In 2014, Shia militias were said to be very active in the area⁸⁸.

Shuala, a Shia neighborhood located in Khadhamiyah, has been particularly targeted by IS⁸⁹, including with a VBIED on May 11, 2017⁹⁰. Shia militias were said to operate openly in the neighborhood, particularly Asaib Ahl al-Haq, as recently as 2014⁹¹. Many abductions and killings of Sunnis living in this neighborhood were reported during that year⁹², while corpses of Sunnis abducted in other neighborhoods have also been found in this area⁹³.

In Khadhamiyah District, the Shia neighborhoods of **Hurriya** and **Utayfah** have also been targeted by IS in October 2016⁹⁴.

2.1.8. Mansour District

⁸⁰ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: April 12 - 25, 2016", 25/04/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "ISIS's explosive attacks in the greater Baghdad Area: April 4-May 11, 2016", 11/05/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: December 21, 2016 - January 5, 2017", 05/01/2017;

⁸¹ UNAMI, "Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 November 2015 – 30 September 2016", 30/12/2016, p. 28; Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014.

⁸² Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: October 12-17, 2016", 17/10/2016

⁸³ Institute for the Study of War, "Karkh"; IZADY Michael, "Baghdad: Ethnic composition in 2015", 2015

⁸⁴ IZADY Michael, "Baghdad: Ethnic composition in 2015", 2015

⁸⁵ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: September 7-19, 2016", 19/09/2016

⁸⁶ IZADY Michael, "Baghdad: Ethnic composition in 2015", 2015; Institute for the Study of War, "Kadhimiya"

⁸⁷ Institute for the Study of War, "ISIS's explosive attacks in the greater Baghdad Area: April 4-May 11, 2016", 11/05/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: May 24 - June 1, 2016", 01/06/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: July 19-25, 2016", 25/07/2016

⁸⁸ Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014; Amnesty International, "Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq", 14/10/2014

⁸⁹ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: July 26-August 2, 2016", 02/08/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: December 21, 2016 - January 5, 2017", 05/01/2017; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: January 6-11, 2017", 11/01/2017.

⁹⁰ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: May 6 - 20, 2017", 20/05/2017

⁹¹ Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014

⁹² Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014

⁹³ Amnesty International, "Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq", 14/10/2014, p. 6

⁹⁴ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: October 26 - November 1, 2016", 01/11/2016

Mansour is a predominantly Sunni district⁹⁵, which also includes Shia neighborhoods in the Northeast⁹⁶. The district has been less targeted by IS than other parts of Baghdad, though at least 4 attacks hit the Sunni neighborhoods of **Adil**⁹⁷ and **Yarmouk**⁹⁸ and the Shia neighborhood of **Iskan**⁹⁹ over the past year.

As recently as 2014, Shia militias were described as being very active in this district, especially Asaib Ahl al-Haq. Many abductions and killings of Sunni residents were reported in this area at that time. Human Rights Watch documented several cases that occurred particularly in the neighborhood of **Ghazalia**, which is divided between a Sunni sector in the South and a Shia sector in the North¹⁰⁰.

2.1.9. Rasheed District

Rasheed is the largest District of Baghdad and is mixed, including predominantly Shia neighborhoods in the West and Sunni, Christian and mixed neighborhoods in the East (Dora neighborhood)¹⁰¹. Rasheed has been one of the most targeted district by IS attacks over the past year¹⁰².

The predominantly Shia neighborhood of **Bayaa (also called the 4th police district)**, in Rasheed District, has been the worst hit of the district. IS Attacks occurred between July 2016 and February 2017 and most of them involved a VBIED¹⁰³.

Amil is a predominantly Shia neighborhood that has been targeted at least twice by IS attacks over the past year, notably in March 20, 2017 with a VBIED¹⁰⁴. Several cases of abductions and killings of Sunni residents by Shia militias have also been reported in this neighborhood in 2015 and 2016¹⁰⁵.

Dora is a mixed neighborhood located in Rasheed District, which is comprised of Sunni, Shia and Christian residents. A refinery is also located in the eastern part of Dora¹⁰⁶. Shia pilgrims have been targeted at least twice by IS attacks in the neighborhood in April and May 2016¹⁰⁷. Asaib Ahl al-Haq were said to be omnipresent in Dora as far as 2014¹⁰⁸. Many cases of abductions and killings of Sunni residents were reported at that time,¹⁰⁹ as the militia was reportedly convinced that the area was plagued with IS sleeper cells¹¹⁰.

⁹⁵ Institute for the Study of War, "Mansour"

⁹⁶ IZADY Michael, "Baghdad: Ethnic composition in 2015", 2015

⁹⁷ Institute for the Study of War, "ISIS's explosive attacks in the greater Baghdad Area: April 4-May 11, 2016", 11/05/2016

⁹⁸ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: December 21, 2016 - January 5, 2017", 05/01/2017

⁹⁹ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: September 20 - October 3, 2016", 03/10/2016

¹⁰⁰ Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014

¹⁰¹ Institute for the Study of War, "Rasheed"; IZADY Michael, "Baghdad: Ethnic composition in 2015", 2015

¹⁰² See the "Iraq Situation Reports" published by the Institute for the Study of War

¹⁰³ See the "Iraq Situation Reports" published by the Institute for the Study of War at the following dates: 06/07/2016, 03/10/2016, 20/12/2016, 05/01/2017, 11/01/2017, 16/02/2017.

¹⁰⁴ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: September 20 - October 3, 2016", 03/10/2016;

Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: March 1-20, 2017", 20/03/2017

¹⁰⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014; UNAMI, "Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 November 2015 – 30 September 2016", 30/12/2016, p. 31

¹⁰⁶ IZADY Michael, "Baghdad: Ethnic composition in 2015", 2015; Institute for the Study of War, "Rasheed"

¹⁰⁷ Institute for the Study of War, "ISIS's explosive attacks in the greater Baghdad Area: April 4-May 11, 2016", 11/05/2016

¹⁰⁸ BARTHE Benjamin, "A Bagdad, 'les sunnites ont plus peur des milices chiites que des djihadistes'", *Le Monde*, 08/07/2014

¹⁰⁹ UNAMI, "Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 November 2015 – 30 September 2016", 30/12/2016, p. 30; Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014

¹¹⁰ BARTHE Benjamin, "A Bagdad, 'les sunnites ont plus peur des milices chiites que des djihadistes'", *Le Monde*, 08/07/2014

The predominantly Shia neighborhood of **Al-Alam**, in Rasheed District, has also been hit at least twice by IS attacks in the past year¹¹¹.

Saydiya is a mixed neighborhood located in Rasheed District where no IS attacks have been reported¹¹². The Shia militia Asaib Ahl al-Haq was said to be omnipresent in the neighborhood as far as 2014¹¹³, and many cases of abductions and killings of Sunni residents were reported¹¹⁴.

In the agricultural area of **Arab Jabour**, which hosts a majority of Sunni residents, the ISF hold a security checkpoint that was targeted at least twice by terrorist attacks in July and August 2016¹¹⁵.

Finally, the agricultural area of **Suwaib**, in Rasheed District, has been targeted by at least one IS attack, in June 2016.¹¹⁶

2.2. The Baghdad Belt

Four districts surround the Capital and form what is called the "Baghdad Belt" : the predominantly Shia district of **Al-Mada'in**; the districts of **Tarmiya** and **Mahmudiya**, which both include Shia and Sunni neighborhoods; and **Abu Ghraib** District, which is predominantly Sunni. These are mainly residential, agricultural and industrial areas¹¹⁷.

IS still has sleeper cells in the Baghdad Belt, especially in the North and the South, which are connected to networks in Anbar, Salahaddin and Diyala, and from which it can organize attacks¹¹⁸. As a consequence, there have been as many incidents in the Baghdad Belt as in the city itself over the past year, especially in the North and the South of the Governorate,¹¹⁹. Because of IS activity in the area, the Sunni inhabitants tend to be considered by Shia militias as terrorist supporters and thus targeted by them¹²⁰.

2.2.1. The North of the Baghdad Belt

The North of the Baghdad Belt, which includes Shia and Sunni neighborhoods, has been seriously targeted by IS attacks over the past year¹²¹.

The Sunni town of **El Taji** has been especially badly hit. The military camp and the gas plant, located in the city were targeted in May and June 2016 by complex attacks

¹¹¹ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: August 31-September 6, 2016", 06/09/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: February 2-10, 2017", 10/02/2017.

¹¹² See the "Iraq Situation Reports" published by the Institute for the Study of War

¹¹³ BARTHE Benjamin, "A Bagdad, 'les sunnites ont plus peur des milices chiites que des djihadistes'", *Le Monde*, 08/07/2014

¹¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014; Amnesty International, "Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq", 14/10/2014, p. 15

¹¹⁵ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: June 29 - July 6, 2016", 06/07/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: August 9-15, 2016", 15/08/2016

¹¹⁶ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: June 21 - 28, 2016", 28/06/2016

¹¹⁷ NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq, "Baghdad Governorate Profile", December 2015; IZADY Michael, "Baghdad: Ethnic composition in 2015", 2015

¹¹⁸ *Musings on Iraq*, "Iraq security trends Jan 2016-Apr 2017", 10/05/2017; *Al Monitor*, "The rise of Islamic State sleeper cells in Baghdad", 11/03/2016

¹¹⁹ *Musings on Iraq*, "4,290 dead and wounded in Iraq in February 2017", 02/03/2017

¹²⁰ *Al Monitor*, "The rise of Islamic State sleeper cells in Baghdad", 11/03/2016; *Niqash*, "Baghdad border bad lands: Why the Iraqi capital can never truly be secure?" 28/04/2016

¹²¹ See the "Iraq Situation Reports" published by the Institute for the Study of War

involving VBIEDs.¹²² Many abductions and killings of Sunni residents by Shia militias, who held a checkpoint in the area, were reported between 2014 and 2016¹²³.

The Shia neighborhood of **Al-Rashidiya** was targeted by numerous IS attacks between April and July 2016. Most of them targeted the security checkpoint located in the neighborhood and involved VBIEDs¹²⁴.

The city of **Tarmiyah**, where a security checkpoint is located, has also been targeted by several IS attacks. Most recently, in May 2017, the Iraqi security forces foiled a suicide-vest attack in the area¹²⁵.

The security checkpoints located in the neighborhoods of **Al-Husseiniya** and **Bawb al-Sham** were also hit by several VBIEDs between May and August 2016¹²⁶.

2.2.2. The Southwest of the Baghdad Belt

Abu Ghraib, a predominantly Sunni district in the West of the Baghdad Belt, has been especially badly hit. Over the past year, religious gatherings, security zones and an IDP camp have been targeted by IS suicide-vest attacks, some of which were thwarted.¹²⁷ Many abductions and killings of Sunni residents by Shia militias were also reported in the area between 2014 and 2016¹²⁸.

The neighborhood of **Al-Radwanayah** was hit by a deadly IS attack in April 2016¹²⁹.

Finally, abductions and killings of Sunni residents by Shia militias have been reported in the district of **Mahmudiyah**¹³⁰, which is said to be controlled by Asaib Ahl al-Haq¹³¹.

¹²² Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: May 11-24, 2016", 24/05/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: June 8-13, 2016", 13/06/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: June 14 - 20, 2016", 20/06/2016;

¹²³ UNAMI, "Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 November 2015 – 30 September 2016", 30/12/2016, p. 28 and p. 30 ; Amnesty International, "Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq", 14/10/2014, p. 6 and p. 7.

¹²⁴ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: April 12 - 25, 2016", 25/04/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "ISIS's explosive attacks in the greater Baghdad Area: April 4-May 11, 2016", 11/05/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: July 7-13, 2016", 13/07/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: July 13-18, 2016", 18/07/2016

¹²⁵ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: July 13-18, 2016", 18/07/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: July 13-18, 2016", 18/07/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: April 21 - May 5, 2017", 05/05/2017;

¹²⁶ Institute for the Study of War, "ISIS's explosive attacks in the greater Baghdad Area: April 4-May 11, 2016", 11/05/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: July 7-13, 2016", 13/07/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: August 16-22, 2016", 22/08/2016

¹²⁷ Institute for the Study of War, "ISIS's explosive attacks in the greater Baghdad Area: April 4-May 11, 2016", 11/05/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: May 11-24, 2016", 24/05/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: June 21 - 28, 2016", 28/06/2016; Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: February 17-28, 2017", 28/02/2017.

¹²⁸ Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014; UNAMI, "Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 November 2015 – 30 September 2016", 30/12/2016

¹²⁹ Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Situation Report: April 12 - 25, 2016", 25/04/2016

¹³⁰ Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Pro-government militias' trail of death", 31/07/2014

¹³¹ *Niqash*, "Baghdad border bad lands: Why the Iraqi capital can never truly be secure?" 28/04/2016

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