

## *Iraq: Extremism and Terrorism*

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On April 21, 2024, Iraqi militants in Zummar launched five rockets toward a U.S. military base in Rumalyn, Syria. No U.S. personnel were injured. A U.S. official called the launch a “failed rocket attack” in an interview with Reuters. Fighter jets from the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and Syria launched a counterstrike, destroying a rocket launcher-equipped pickup truck in Zummar. After the attack, a Kata’ib Hezbollah (KH)-affiliated group on Telegram announced that KH and other Iraqi militias were resuming their attacks on U.S. forces. The KH-linked Sabreen News group on Telegram later reported that KH had not issued an official statement. On April 22, KH issued a statement on Telegram denying reports that it would resume violent attacks on U.S. forces. KH called the reports “fabricated news.” According to Pentagon press secretary Major General Patrick Ryder, the April 21 incident resulted from “some type of malfunction” in which a rocket-launching truck was “shooting rockets all over the place.” (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Al-Monitor](#))

On April 13, 2024, Iraqi militias joined Iranian and Houthi forces in simultaneously launching airstrikes against Israel in retaliation for an April 1 airstrike on an Iranian consulate within its embassy complex in Damascus. Despite Iran launching more than 300 drones and missiles in its first-ever direct attack against Israel, 99 percent were intercepted by Israeli, U.S., U.K., and regional forces. The missiles that did reach Israeli territory caused minimal damage to an air base and wounded a child in southern Israel. The April 1 strike killed seven military advisers from Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Quds Force, Iran’s elite foreign operations paramilitary arm. Citing security risks, Iraq closed its airspace briefly on April 13 before reopening on April 14. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [U.S. News & World Report](#), [Times of Israel](#))

Iranian influence across Iraq has led to a number of U.S. operations targeting Baghdad. On February 7, 2024, the United States carried out a precision drone strike in Baghdad. The strike reportedly killed three, including Abu Baqir Al-Saadi, commander of Kata’ib Hezbollah (KH) operations in Syria who was reportedly responsible for planning and participating in attacks on American troops in the region. KH is a Shiite militia that belongs to the Islamic Resistance in Iraq (IRI), an umbrella group of Iran-backed Shiite militias. A few days prior, on February 4, the IRI carried out a drone strike from Iraq on a Syrian military base in Deir Ezzor, Syria, killing at least six allied Kurdish soldiers. The base hosts U.S. forces, though no American casualties were reported. The strike was launched in response to recent U.S. strikes against Iran-backed militant groups in eastern Syria and western Iraq, as well as Houthi militant targets in Yemen. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Fox News](#), [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), [CBS News](#))

Up until January 2024, the United States maintained 2,500 troops in Iraq. However, on January 5, the Iraqi government announced the intention to remove U.S. troops from the country. The decision was in response to a January 4 U.S. strike in Baghdad that killed Mushtaq Jawad Kazim al Jawari, the leader of the Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba Shiite militia. Shiite militias form a powerful bloc in Prime Minister Muhammed al-Sudani’s governing coalition and have greatly pressured the prime minister to end U.S. presence in Iraq. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#))

The IRI network includes established Shiite militias such as KH, Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN), and Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada (KSS), as well as lesser-known militias such as Tashkil al-Waritheen. The umbrella group has carried out regular attacks against U.S. targets in Iraq and Syria since the onset of the Hamas-Israel War in October 2023, claiming its attacks are in retaliation for U.S. President Joe Biden’s support of Israel. Between October 2023 and February 2024, security officials recorded approximately 170 attacks against U.S. and Coalition forces in Iraq and Syria. On February 2, 2024, the United States carried out multiple strikes against Iran-backed forces across Syria and Iraq, hitting more than 85 targets including command and control operations, intelligence centers, weapons facilities, and bunkers used by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Forces (IRGC-QF) as well as their affiliated militia groups. A couple of weeks earlier on January 15, 2024, the IRGC launched missiles targeting an Israeli “spy headquarters” in Irbil, Iraq, as well as ISIS elements in northern Syria. The Irbil strike occurred near the U.S. consulate, killing four civilians and injuring six. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), [CBS News](#), [Associated Press](#), [Associated Press](#))

## **Overview**

Since the 2003 downfall of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, violent extremist groups such as ISIS and Iranian-backed Shiite militias have capitalized on longstanding sectarian divisions among Iraq’s Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish populations to radicalize Iraqis and expand their own influence. The Iraqi government has had to contend with balancing sectarian divisions in order to present a unified military front against ISIS.

Iraqi sectarianism has fueled extremism in the country, according to Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi. ISIS and other groups have used historic divisions between Iraqi Shiites, Sunnis, Kurds, Turkmen, and other minorities to increase their recruitment. As president from 1979 until 2003, Saddam Hussein violently repressed opposition groups and maintained strict military control that inflamed Iraqi and regional Sunni-Shiite tensions.

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In September 1980, Hussein invaded neighboring Iran and launched a failed eight-year-long war during which both sides systematically rocketed each other's major cities and Iraqi Kurds aided Iran. In August 1990, Hussein's army crossed into Kuwait, occupying the country and declaring it a province of Iraq. The invasion led to the 1991 Operation Desert Shield in which a U.S.-led coalition forced Hussein to withdraw. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [BBC News](#), [U.K. Defense Intelligence](#), [New York Times](#), [BBC News](#), [New York Times](#), [CNN](#), [BBC News](#))

As of December 2021, ISIS and Iran-backed Shiite militias presented the primary terrorist threat in Iraq, according to the U.S. State Department. In the aftermath of Hussein's 2003 removal from power, extremist organizations such as al-Qaeda and Jaysh al-Mahdi launched a violent insurgency against the Iraqi government. At the same time, Iranian-backed militias such as Kata'ib Hezbollah sought to gain influence in Iraq by joining the insurrection. Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) emerged as a central actor in the insurgency, eventually expanding and changing its name to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and began to seize territory in northwestern Iraq. After capturing Iraq's second largest city of Mosul in June 2014, ISIS declared an Islamic caliphate in captured portions of Iraq and Syria. Within its captured territory, ISIS enacted brutal discriminatory laws against non-Sunnis, particularly Iraq's Yazidi and Christian minorities. ISIS has also engaged in the widespread murder, kidnapping, and enslavement of these minorities, leading Amnesty International and other humanitarian groups to accuse ISIS of ethnic cleansing. In non-ISIS-held portions of Iraq, the group has engaged in suicide bombings, shootings, and other violent attacks targeting Iraqi government forces and civilians. Within its captured territory, ISIS has destroyed Iraqi cultural and religious sites, brutally enforced religious restrictions, and violently oppressed Iraqi minorities. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [Bloomberg News](#), [Amnesty International](#), [U.N. OHCHR](#), [CNN](#))

At its height, ISIS controlled more than 40 percent of Iraqi territory, but by April 2017 the U.S.-backed Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and the Global Coalition against ISIS had reduced ISIS's hold on Iraqi territory to less than 7 percent. As of March 7, 2017, the coalition had conducted more than 11,000 airstrikes in Iraq, destroying thousands of ISIS positions, vehicles, and other targets. Backed by U.S. airstrikes, the ISF continued to battle against ISIS forces in Mosul, which ISIS captured in 2014. The 100,000-strong ISF operation liberated the eastern side of the city from the militants in January 2017. On July 10, 2017, the Iraqi government announced the liberation of Mosul, where Baghdadi had declared ISIS's caliphate three years earlier. ISIS continued to lose territory in Iraq throughout 2017, and following the November 17 recapture of Rawa, the last ISIS-held town in Iraq, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared military victory over ISIS in the country. On December 9, Abadi announced that the Iraqi-Syrian border was fully secure. However, Iraqi officials fear that the group is shifting its strategy to that of a more traditional insurgency. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [Independent](#), [Global Coalition Against Daesh](#), [U.S. Department of Defense](#), [Reuters](#), [CBS News](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Washington Post](#), [CBS News](#), [Business Insider](#), [CNN](#))

Iraqis remain divided on how to counter ISIS. Polling by ORB International revealed that as of July 2015, 56 percent of Iraqis opposed coalition airstrikes targeting the ISIS militants, despite 84 percent believing that ISIS has a "strongly negative" influence in the country. In addition, a March 2016 International Organization for Migration poll discovered that 80 percent of nearly 500 Iraqi migrants in living Europe cited "no hope for the future" as their primary reason for fleeing the country. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [BBC News](#), [ORB International](#), [International Organization for Migration](#))

The Iraqi government is also contending with Kurdish separatism. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Iraqi Kurdish separatists aided Iran during the Iran-Iraq War, particularly in capturing the key Iraqi border town of Hajj Umran. In recent years, Kurdish Peshmerga forces have joined the Iraqi government in fighting ISIS, but have also sought to use recaptured Iraqi territory as part of a future Kurdish state. Within the autonomous Kurdish areas, tensions between Kurds and Turkmens have resulted in riots, such as on July 28, 2008, when a Kurdish mob blamed Turkmen extremists for a suicide bombing in the city earlier that day and attacked Turkmen offices in Kirkuk. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [New York Times](#))

## **Radicalization and Foreign Fighters**

During Saddam Hussein's 24-year rule, he violently suppressed dissent and sought regional hegemony. At the same time, Hussein instituted policies that legalized the Muslim Brotherhood and expanded the influence of Salafism in Iraq. These policies directly contributed to the rise of militant Salafist groups in Iraq after Hussein's regime was deposed in 2003. Iraq has since been a sectarian battleground between extremist Sunni groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS and predominantly Shiite Iraqi government forces and Iranian-backed Shiite militias vying for influence.

### *Baath Party*

Created in 1951, the Arab Socialist Baath Party, also known as the Iraqi Baath ("renaissance") party, advocated pan-Arabism, anti-colonialism, socialism, and secular nationalism. Under Baathist ideology, each individual Arab state is part of a larger Arab nation. The Iraqi Baathist party—headed by Assistant General Secretary Saddam Hussein—came to power in Iraq through a 1968 military coup led by General Ahmad Hassan

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al-Bakr. Bakr assumed Iraq's presidency and appointed Hussein to organize the Baath party's militia and establish its security agencies. By November 1969, Hussein's security team had effectively purged opposition rivals and dissidents, leading Bakr to promote Hussein to vice president and head of the Revolutionary Command Council. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#))

Hussein assumed the presidency in 1979 and immediately began to violently suppress any individual or group he viewed as a threat to his reign. Baathists who Hussein deemed disloyal were immediately detained or killed. Hussein promoted the purge as patriotism and advocated for loyalty to him rather than to the Baathist party and its ideology. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [U.K Defense Intelligence](#), [New York Times](#))

In September 1980, Hussein invaded Iran in attempt to expand his influence in the Middle East. The eight-year-long war ended with a July 1988 ceasefire after both sides had rocketed each other's major cities, resulting in major infrastructure damage and civilian casualties. In August 1990, Hussein's army crossed into Kuwait, occupying the country and declaring it a province of Iraq. In January 1991, a 39-country coalition, led by the United States, deployed forces to Kuwait under Operation Desert Shield to force Hussein to withdraw. After a five-week aerial and ground campaign, the coalition liberated Kuwait on February 27, 1991. In April 1991, Hussein agreed to accept the terms of a U.N. cease-fire agreement, which subjected Iraq to a weapons-inspections program. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [BBC News](#), [New York Times](#), [CNN](#))

For the next decade, Hussein sought to convince the international community that he had discontinued his weapons programs. Simultaneously, Hussein falsely claimed he possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in order to appear militarily stronger to his enemies in Iran and Israel, according to the U.S. Department of Defense. Hussein consistently refused U.N. weapon inspectors access to document or destroy Iraq's collection of unconventional weapons. The United States invaded Iraq in March 2003 based on intelligence reports of an active WMD development program. The U.S. military ousted Hussein, who immediately went into hiding. He was captured in December of that year in Tikrit and executed in December 2006 after an Iraqi court convicted him of crimes against humanity. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [CNN](#), [BBC News](#))

Since Hussein's overthrow, former Hussein loyalists have taken leadership roles in Iraq's extremist Salafist organizations. Iraqi officials estimate that at least 100 senior and mid-level ISIS leaders are former Hussein loyalists, including [Abul-Mughirah al-Qahtani](#) and [Abu Ayman al-Iraqi](#). In 1994, Hussein initiated the Faith Campaign, which integrated strict Islamic fundamentalist concepts into the Iraqi state. The words "God is great" were added to the Iraqi flag, amputation became a legalized punishment for theft, and the Muslim Brotherhood was legalized. A new wave of Salafism spread in Iraq as the Brotherhood expanded its activities. Simultaneously, as part of the Faith Campaign, Hussein ordered his military intelligence forces to infiltrate mosques, which had the effect of increasing Salafism within the ranks of Hussein's military forces. After the fall of the Hussein regime, the United States disbanded Iraq's military and purged Baathists from the government. Removed from their military roles, the Salafists from the former Baathist regime joined al-Qaeda in Iraq and other extremist organizations. ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi reportedly prioritized the recruitment of former Baathists. (Sources: [National Review](#), [Washington Post](#), [New York Times](#), [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#))

### *Iraqi Kurds*

Kurds in Iraq as well as southeastern Turkey, western Iran, and northern Syria, have long sought the creation of an independent Kurdistan encompassing those areas. Kurdish separatists in Iraq have been responsible for terrorist attacks in the country. Iraqi Kurdistan is a semi-autonomous area in northern Iraq near the borders with Turkey, Iran, and Syria. Iraqi Kurdistan maintains its own parliament and its own security forces—the Peshmerga—which have aided in the fight against ISIS. (Sources: [Stars & Stripes](#), [BBC News](#))

British forces occupied Kurdish areas in 1918 following the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Britain incorporated some of these areas, including Mosul, into Iraq the following year. In 1923, Kurdish rebels declared a short-lived kingdom in northern Iraq in defiance of the British occupation. In 1946, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) formed in Iranian Kurdistan. The KDP initially sought self-governance but shifted its focus to self-determination. Iraqi Kurds complained of increasing discrimination by the Iraqi government during the 1950s. After the 1958 overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy, Iraqi Kurds were promised autonomy in a new constitution, but Iraq temporarily dissolved the KDP in 1961 after a Kurdish rebellion. A 1970 agreement between the Iraqi government and the Kurds granted Iraqi Kurds autonomy, but further negotiations broke down and resulted in a new Kurdish rebellion in 1974. In 1975, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)—another Kurdish political party—broke away from the KDP. (Sources: [Federation of American Scientists](#), [KDP website](#), [PBS](#), [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#))

When the Iran-Iraq War began in 1980, some Kurds sided with Iran and joined in attacks against Iraqi forces. In 1983, the two main Kurdish parties—the PUK and the KDP—openly rebelled against the Hussein regime. Beginning in 1987 toward the end of the Iran-Iraq war, the Iraqi government killed tens of thousands of Kurdish civilians and fighters in an attempt to quash an uprising. Iraq formalized the operation in 1988 as al-Anfal ("the spoils"). Iraqi forces employed sarin, mustard, and other nerve gases, killing up to 100,000 Kurds during the almost-seven-month-long campaign, according to Human Rights Watch. A March 16, 1988, poison gas attack on the Iraqi town of Halabja killed approximately 5,000 Kurdish

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civilians. Fighting between the Kurds and Iraqi forces continued through 1991, when Kurdish Peshmerga forces seized the Iraqi cities of Irbil and Sulaymaniyah. An Iraqi blockade and infighting between the KDP and the PUK resulted in an Iraqi Kurdish civil war, which ended with a 1998 peace treaty between the two factions. (Sources: [Human Rights Watch](#), [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#))

Another Kurdish faction, Jund al-Islam, began violently clashing with the PUK in 2001. Jund al-Islam became Ansar al-Islam (AAI) after the 2001 merger of Jund al-Islam with several other violent Kurdish groups. AAI seeks the creation of a sharia-based Islamic state. The U.S. government designated AAI as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in 2004 because of its “close links to and support from” al-Qaeda. AAI initially trained in al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan, and provided a safe haven in Iraq for al-Qaeda leaders fleeing the country after the U.S. invasion. AAI has since targeted Iraqi, U.S., and coalition forces in Iraq. Part of the group pledged allegiance to ISIS in 2014, but another faction within AAI has continued to fight against ISIS in Syria. In Iraq, AAI continues to target the Iraqi government and coalition forces. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Council on Foreign Relations](#), [Long War Journal](#))

Iraq granted its Kurdish population a semi-autonomous area in the north under the country’s 2005 constitution. After ISIS began capturing territory in Iraq in 2014, Iraqi Kurds joined the fight to repel the terror group through the U.S.-backed Peshmerga forces. Iraqi Kurdish forces have attempted to hold certain territory that they liberated from ISIS in order to create an independent Kurdistan. For example, as of January 2017, Kurdish forces had dug a 650-mile trench around territory recaptured from ISIS in northern Iraq. Kurds have reportedly added 40 percent to their territory since 2014. However, Iraqi officials chastised Kurdish leaders for “getting ahead of themselves” before ISIS’s defeat was complete. In September 2017, Iraqi Kurds voted for independence in a referendum, with an overwhelming 92 percent in favor. However, the Iraqi government rejected the referendum as unconstitutional. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) offered to “freeze” the result of the referendum and engage in dialogue with the Iraqi government. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [Associated Press](#), [Guardian](#), [Reuters](#), [CNN](#), [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#))

### *ISIS and al-Qaeda in Iraq*

ISIS’s origins date back to the aftermath of the 2003 U.S. invasion and deposal of Saddam Hussein. On October 17, 2004, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi’s group of jihadist fighters pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda, calling themselves Tanzim Qa’idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (the Organization of Jihad’s Base in the Land of the Two Rivers), a.k.a. al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). In October 2006, AQI changed its name to the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI). In April 2013, ISI merged with the Nusra Front to form the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), although the Nusra Front subsequently broke away from the group. In June 2014, ISIS leader [Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi](#) declared an Islamic caliphate in parts of Iraq and Syria and named himself caliph. (Sources: [Foreign Policy](#), [National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism](#), [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#), [Globalsecurity.org](#), [New York Times](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [New York Times](#), [Al Jazeera](#))

Baghdadi is an Iraqi native who rose in the ranks of AQI. After the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, Baghdadi created the militant group Jamaat Jaysh Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaah to target U.S. soldiers. Sometime between 2004 and 2009, U.S. forces captured Baghdadi and incarcerated him in the U.S. prison facility Camp Bucca in Iraq, where he met other future ISIS leaders. In April 2010, Baghdadi assumed the role of emir of ISI. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [Newsweek](#), [Brookings Institution](#), [New York Times](#))

ISIS has specifically targeted Shiites in Iraq. For example, two bombings over July 2-3, 2016, targeted Shiite neighborhoods in Baghdad. The July 2 suicide bombing of a Baghdad shopping area killed more than 200 people and was Iraq’s deadliest bombing in years. The bombings came a week after Iraqi forces recaptured the city of Fallujah from ISIS. In September 2014, Amnesty International reported that ISIS had “carried out ethnic cleansing on a historic scale in northern Iraq ... systematically target[ing] non-Arab and non-Sunni Muslim communities, killing or abducting hundreds, possibly thousands, and forcing more than 830,000 others to flee the areas it has captured” since June 10, 2014. (Sources: [CNN](#), [CNN](#), [CNN](#), [Amnesty International](#))

ISIS has targeted Iraq’s cultural and archaeological history as well. In February 2015, video emerged of ISIS fighters destroying ancient statues and other relics at a museum in Mosul. Also that month, ISIS militants burned the Mosul public library, which reportedly housed more than 8,000 rare books and manuscripts. Within three days in March 2015, ISIS razed the ancient Assyrian city of Nimrud and the ancient city of Hatra, both in northern Iraq, destroying archaeological ruins. In July 2014, ISIS blew up the shrine at the reputed burial site of the biblical prophet Jonah in Mosul. After Iraqi forces retook Nimrud in November 2016, Mosul Museum employee Leila Salih surveyed the damage and told NBC News that ISIS had attacked Iraqis’ “culture, our history, our memories. They tried to destroy the identity of Iraq.” (Sources: [Fiscal Times](#), [CNN](#), [CNN](#), [New York Times](#), [NBC News](#), [Agence France-Presse](#), [NBC News](#))

On June 21, 2017, as ISIS’s situation in Mosul began to grow desperate, the group blew up the city’s historic Great Mosque of al-Nuri, where Baghdadi had declared ISIS’s caliphate in 2014. Built in the 12th century, the mosque included a leaning minaret called al-Hadba. UNESCO

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Director-General Irina Bokova condemned the destruction, calling the mosque and the minaret “among the most iconic sites” in the city. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi called ISIS’s destruction of the over-800-year-old mosque “an official announcement of their defeat” in Mosul. (Sources: [CNN](#), [New York Times](#))

ISIS has also tried to influence U.S. actions in Iraq through violence against foreign civilians. In August 2014, ISIS released a video entitled “A Message to America,” which showed a masked ISIS militant—nicknamed “Jihadi John” by former captives—beheading kidnapped American journalist James Foley and threatening to kill another such journalist, Steven Sotloff, if then-U.S. President Barack Obama did not end U.S. military operations in Iraq. That September, ISIS released “A Second Message to America,” a video of Sotloff’s beheading. Jihadi John has since been identified as [Mohammed Emwazi](#), part of a four-member cell of British ISIS guards known by prisoners as “The Beatles” because of their accents. Emwazi died in a November 2015 U.S. drone strike in Raqqa, Syria. (Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Washington Post](#), [CNN](#), [CNN](#))

On August 4, 2014, ISIS began its assault on the Yazidi population in Iraq’s northern Sinjar province. ISIS has reportedly killed about 5,000 Yazidi men and taken captive thousands of women and children. Captured Yazidi men and boys were forcibly converted to Islam and enslaved for labor, while women and girls were sold into sex slavery. Additionally, Yazidi religious shrines were marked for destruction. According to a June 2016 report by the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), ISIS has “sought to destroy the Yazidis through killings; sexual slavery, enslavement, torture and inhuman and degrading treatment and forcible transfer causing serious bodily and mental harm.” Approximately 400,000 Yazidis have been displaced as a result of ISIS. As of April 2017, ISIS continued to hold captive approximately 1,500 Yazidi women and children. (Sources: [Fox News](#), [Associated Press](#), [United Nations](#), [BBC News](#), [U.N. OHCHR](#))

After ISIS began capturing territory in 2014, the terror group forced Iraqi Christians to convert to Islam under threat of death. ISIS also banned non-Islamic religious practices in the areas of Iraq under its control. As a result, Iraq’s Christian population has diminished from 1.4 million in 2003 to an estimated 150,000 to 275,000 in 2016. Iraqi Christians continue to come under attack in Iraqi-controlled parts of the country. On December 23, 2016, unidentified gunmen attacked Christian-owned shops selling alcohol in Baghdad, killing three people and wounding four others. Iraqi Christians have told media that they fear there is no future for them in Iraq. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [CNN](#), [CBS News](#), [CNN](#), [Knights of Columbus p. 222 & 223](#), [Christian Times](#), [Jerusalem Post](#))

ISIS has relied on a combination of violence and incentives to recruit Iraqis. In January 2015, ISIS executed 15 people in the Nineveh Province who refused to join the terror group. Two suspected ISIS members captured in Mosul told Reuters in November 2016 that the group preys on sectarian divisions in Shiite-majority Iraq. Incarcerated Sunni ISIS fighters told Reuters that ISIS had offered them money, food, and promises to defend Sunnis against the physical beatings and other discrimination that they had suffered under the Iraqi government and army. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [Reuters](#))

ISIS has also utilized Iraqi schools to indoctrinate Sunni youth. After ISIS began seizing territory in 2014, the terror group allowed schools to continue operating but instituted gender segregation, strict dress codes for girls, and the banishment of so-called un-Islamic subjects such as music, history, and geography. During the 2015 school year, ISIS began instituting its own curricula with an emphasis on sharia (Islamic law) and Salafism, and many parents stopped sending their children to school as a result. According to a November 2016 statement by the international NGO Save the Children, more than 1 million children living under ISIS in Iraq between 2014 and 2016 either withdrew from school completely or were forced into an ISIS curriculum. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Save the Children](#), [Al-Monitor](#))

In October 2016, the Iraqi government released a report claiming that ISIS had indoctrinated and militarily trained 4,000 children to carry out suicide and other terrorist acts since 2014. In August 2015, Iraqi police in Kirkuk arrested a 15-year-old boy wearing a suicide vest. The teenager told authorities that ISIS had brainwashed him. In November 2017, another teen accidentally killed himself and five family members in their Mosul home after his suicide belt exploded prematurely. ISIS has kidnapped children as young as 8 to be indoctrinated. Europol has warned that these children will be the new generation of jihadists. (Sources: [Fox News](#), [International Business Times](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [CNN](#), [CNN](#))

On July 10, 2017, the Iraqi government declared victory against ISIS in Mosul after an almost-nine-month battle. ISIS continued to lose territory in Iraq throughout 2017, and following the November 17 recapture of Rawa, the last ISIS-held town in Iraq, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared military victory over ISIS in the country. On December 9, Abadi announced that Iraq was “fully liberated” from ISIS and that the Iraqi-Syrian border was fully secure. In the months prior to ISIS’s defeat in Mosul, however, the Iraqi military reportedly witnessed ISIS commanders fleeing to a mountainous area in northeastern Iraq. Iraqi counterterrorism officials expect ISIS to launch an insurgency on the scale of al-Qaeda’s insurgency after the 2003 invasion of Iraq. In May 2018, Iraqi and U.S. forces arrested five senior ISIS leaders, including a deputy to Baghdadi. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [CBS News](#), [Business Insider](#), [CNN](#), [Washington Post](#))

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According to a January 2018 UNICEF report, the war with ISIS displaced 2.6 million people between 2014 and 2017. Included within that number were 1.3 million children, according to UNICEF. According to a June 2018 Voice of America report, ISIS fighters seeking refuge have continued to displace people in the provinces of Kirkuk and Diyala. (Sources: [Voice of America](#), [Reuters](#))

As of spring 2020, Iraqi intelligence estimated ISIS maintained 2,500 to 3,000 fighters in the country. The terror group began to reassert itself in Iraq as the country faced the economic fallout of crashing oil prices and the novel coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. ISIS is suspected of responsibility for a suicide attack on an Iraqi intelligence building in Kirkuk on April 28, 2020, as well as a May 1 coordinated attack on the Popular Mobilization Forces that killed 10. Speaking on condition of anonymity, Iraqi security officials told the Associated Press that ISIS is receiving supplies, food, transport, and shelter from local sympathizers. The officials expressed concern that ISIS was more organized and better equipped than it had been in years. In April 2020, the Iraqi Ministry of Defense announced ISIS had killed 82 civilians and 88 security personnel in Iraq since the beginning of the year. At least 294 people were wounded in those attacks. That month, Kurdistan Region Peshmerga Minister Shorsh Ismael warned ISIS saw a “golden opportunity” to reassert itself while the Iraqi government was distracted by the COVID-19 pandemic. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Associated Press](#), [Associated Press](#), [Kurdistan 24](#), [Kurdistan 24](#))

ISIS has taken advantage of the Iraqi government’s focus on the COVID-19 global pandemic. The terror group has called on its followers to strike while its enemies are distracted. ISIS has also used an economic crisis stemming from plunging oil prices as a recruitment tool. (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#), [Times](#))

ISIS has launched a self-proclaimed “battle of attrition” campaign in Iraq. Iraqi officials noted in the spring of 2020 that in addition to exploiting government’s focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, ISIS was building up its forces by moving fighters from Syria to Iraq. Iraqi intelligence estimated there were 2,500 to 3,000 ISIS fighters in Iraq as of May 2020. During the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, marked in 2020 between April 23 and May 23, ISIS claimed responsibility for at least 260 attacks in Iraq, killing or wounding 426 people. Attacks included gun attacks, raids, ambushes of security forces, roadside bombs, and the murder of informers. On May 23, 2020, ISIS fighters attacked a police checkpoint on the outskirts of Zammur district in Nineveh province, killing three officers. Observers suspect the attack was revenge for the arrest of ISIS commander Abdul Nasser Qardash earlier that week. Some reports initially claimed Qardash was in fact newly appointed ISIS leader [Amir Muhammad Sa’id Abdul-Rahman al-Mawla](#), who used the pseudonym Abdullah Qardash. Iraqi security forces quickly retracted the claim and identified the captured militant as an ISIS leader who had once been considered as Baghdadi’s replacement. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Arab Weekly](#), [Times](#), [Daily Mail](#), [Arab News](#))

In August 2020, Under-Secretary for the U.N. Counter-Terrorism Office Vladimir Voronkov estimated ISIS maintained more than 10,000 fighters in Syria and Iraq. In September 2020, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein noted an increase in ISIS’s activities in Iraq and claimed the United Nations had underestimated its numbers. On August 28, an alleged ISIS sleeper cell crossed the border from Iraq into Syria and killed at least four members of the Syrian Democratic Forces. In October, Iraqi forces arrested more than a dozen ISIS officials in the country and killed a suspected ISIS financier. In February 2021, Mazloum Abdi, general commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces, warned that ISIS is “trying to revive itself” and continues to threaten regional and global security. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [France 24](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Kurdistan 24](#), [Voice of America](#))

In July 2021, coalition officials warned ISIS continues to regroup in Iraq’s Diyala province as militants reportedly become more nomadic because they cannot control territory outright. Iraqi Intelligence officers and local tribal leaders also warned ISIS is also regrouping in the disputed Kirkuk region in Iraqi Kurdistan. According to the warnings, small groups of ISIS fighters continue to attack military and police checkpoints, assassinate local leaders, and target electricity grids and oil installations. ISIS also claimed responsibility for a July 19, 2021, suicide bombing in Baghdad’s al-Sadr City that killed at least 35 and wounded more than 60 on the eve of the Islamic festival of Eid al-Adha. After the United States ended its combat mission in Iraq on December 9, 2021, U.S. officials said they would keep approximately 2,500 U.S. forces in Iraq in a training and advisory role. Marine General Frank McKenzie, the top U.S. commander in the Middle East, predicted ISIS would remain a threat to Iraq and “keep recreating itself, perhaps under a different name.” In a December 2021 conference call with reporters, John Godfrey, acting coordinator for counterterrorism and special envoy to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, warned the terror group remained a “determined and dangerous enemy.” (Sources: [Guardian](#), [Kurdistan 24](#), [Reuters](#), [New York Times](#), [Associated Press](#), [Al-Monitor](#))

ISIS continued its insurgency in Iraq through 2022. On July 25, 2022, Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani warned of an increase in ISIS attacks after four overnight attacks killed at least nine people. Barzani called the increasing number of attacks “a real threat to the security and stability of Iraq that needs to be stood against seriously.” Between July 14 and July 20, 2022, ISIS claimed three attacks in Iraq that killed or wounded 13 people. ISIS claimed responsibility for or was suspected in a series of attacks in December 2022 that killed at least 14 soldiers and police officers and 11 civilians. Iraqi forces continued to carry out counterterrorism operations targeting ISIS remnants. The international coalition fighting ISIS recorded a 68 percent decline in ISIS attacks in Iraq from the beginning of 2023 through the first week of April. According to the

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coalition's commander, U.S. Major General Matthew McFarlane, ISIS attacks in Iraq and Syria in 2023 have been "relatively small, from one to a few individuals," while the group largely failed to coordinate anything more over the past year. As of March 2023, Iraqi officials estimated there were "no more than 400" ISIS militants scattered in northern and western Iraq. (Sources: [Rudaw](#), [National](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [Agence France-Presse](#))

### *Al-Nusra Front (Hayat Tahrir al-Sham)*

[Al-Nusra Front \(Hayat Tahrir al-Sham\)](#) is primarily active in Syria, but has its origins in Iraq. In the early 2000s, al-Nusra Front leader [Abu Muhammad al-Golani](#) was reportedly incarcerated in the U.S. prison facility Camp Bucca in Iraq. After his release in 2008, Golani resumed his activities with al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) alongside future ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who had also been incarcerated in Bucca. Golani became head of al-Qaeda's operations in Mosul. In 2011, Baghdadi sent Golani and other al-Qaeda fighters into Syria to take advantage of the power vacuum stemming from the civil war. The Golani-led Nusra Front announced itself in a January 2012 video. According to the U.S. government, AQI formed al-Nusra Front to "hijack the struggles of the legitimate Syrian opposition to further its own extremist ideology." In April 2013, after Baghdadi unilaterally claimed that al-Nusra Front answered to his Islamic State in Iraq group (ISI, now ISIS), Golani broke ties with ISI and reaffirmed his allegiance to al-Qaeda central. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Long War Journal](#), [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#), [BBC News](#), [Al Arabiya](#))

### *Muslim Brotherhood*

Created in 1960, the [Iraqi Islamic Party \(IIP\)](#) is the Iraqi branch of the [Muslim Brotherhood](#) and the largest Sunni political party in the country. Though the IIP does not consider itself a formal branch of the Brotherhood, its leaders have acknowledged political and ideological ties to the Egyptian Brotherhood. The IIP originated from the Islamic Brotherhood Society, a social organization affiliated with the Brotherhood that was established in 1944. Iraq's Baathist government banned the IIP in 1968, but Iraqi President Saddam Hussein granted greater freedoms to the IIP and other Islamist parties through his 1993 Faith Campaign. Nonetheless, the IIP could not formally operate as a political party until after the 2003 fall of the Hussein regime, when the transitional government Coalition Provisional Authority and Interim Iraq Governing Council formally lifted the ban on the IIP. (Sources: [Middle East Policy Council](#), [Global Security](#))

The IIP reestablished itself as a political party in the summer of 2003 and promoted the establishment of an Islamist state in Iraq through nonviolence. The IIP was the only existing Sunni party in Iraq from before the Baathist regime, allowing it to quickly reorganize and begin constructing mosques, medical clinics, media stations, and IIP offices throughout northwest Baghdad. The IIP quickly became the largest Sunni political party in Iraq. (Sources: [Global Security](#), [Council on Foreign Relations](#), [Middle East Policy Council](#))

The Iraqi population reportedly viewed the IIP as a sectarian party largely responsible for rising anti-Shiite violence in the early 2000s. By the 2009 local elections, the IIP began to lose voters to other emerging Sunni parties. After national losses in Iraq's 2010 parliamentary elections, the IIP attempted to use the Arab Spring movement to revive its party by holding demonstrations in Iraqi Sunni cities to highlight the Brotherhood's victories across Arab League nations. (Sources: [Middle East Policy Council](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#))

According to IIP spokesman Fareed Sabri, tensions between Iraqi Sunnis and the Shiite government are high. Sabri accused the Shiite-majority government and military of targeting and suppressing the Sunni minority throughout the country. Sabri attests that many Sunnis in Iraq are afraid of the government and that the IIP is politically marginalized by the Shiite leaders because they are Sunnis. Nonetheless, several IIP politicians hold leadership roles in the Iraqi government, such as parliament speaker Salim al-Jabouri. He claims that the IIP is the only official Sunni party in the country. (Sources: [Al-Arabiya English](#), [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#), [Public Radio International](#))

### *Iran-Linked Shiite Militias*

Since the 2003 fall of Saddam Hussein, Iran has sought to extend its influence in Iraq through the financial and material support of Shiite militias. In March 2016, Ali Younusi, adviser to Iranian Supreme Leader [Ali Khamenei](#), announced that "Iran is an empire once again at last, and its capital is Baghdad." The Quds Force of the [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps \(IRGC\)](#) has provided material and financial support for Iraqi Shiite militias in the fight against ISIS as well as during the anti-U.S. insurgency. Under Iranian influence, Iraqi Shiite militias have targeted U.S. forces in Iraq and refused to participate in anti-ISIS operations alongside U.S. forces. The Iranian government has also reportedly lobbied the Iraqi government to order its Shiite Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) to specific action. One member of the PMF, identified only as Abu Hashem, told the *Guardian* that "without the Iranians we wouldn't be able to do anything. If the Iranian advisers weren't there, the battalions wouldn't attack. Their presence

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gave the men confidence in the early days.” (Sources: [Guardian](#), [Bloomberg News](#), [Al Arabiya](#), [Reuters](#))

The PMF is Iraq’s 110,000-plus anti-ISIS volunteer forces also known as Hashid al-Shaabi. The PMF includes Iran-linked Shiite militia groups such as Asaib Ahl al-Haq, the Badr Organization, and Kata’ib Hezbollah. According to Reuters, these groups are “being deployed alongside Iraqi military units as the main combat force.” The Iraqi government created the PMF in June 2014 to unite various Shiite forces in the country in the fight against ISIS. According to now-deceased PMF Deputy Commander Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes, also a commander of Kata’ib Hezbollah, Iran provides the PMF with “fundamental and direct support.” The U.S. Treasury Department had designated Mohandes, a.k.a. [Jamal Jaafar Ibrahim](#), as an adviser to Soleimani. Both Mohandes and Soleimani were killed in a January 3, 2020, U.S. airstrike in Iraq. According to Abu Hashem, the PMF was originally modeled after Iran’s Basij militia, but the various factions insisted on fighting under their own flags and thus the PMF never fully integrated the factions into a singular military force. Mohandes united the factions under his forceful leadership, according to Abu Hashem. And when he died, fractures reemerged in the PMF between factions loyal to Iraq and those more loyal to the Iranian leadership. (Sources: [Guardian](#), [CNN](#), [Reuters](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Long War Journal](#), [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#), [CNN](#), [Washington Post](#), [Reuters](#), [Washington Post](#))

In August 2018, Iranian sources told Reuters that their government had transferred ballistic missiles to its Shiite proxies in Iraq. Further, according to the sources, Iran has begun aiding its proxies to construct their own missiles. A Western source told Reuters that Iran had transferred tens of missiles as a warning to the United States and Israel. According to Iranian and Iraqi sources, the Iranian government made the decision to boost its missile transfers to the Iraqi militias almost two years earlier with the intention of launching retaliatory strikes in case of a U.S. attack on Iran. The Iranian government immediately rejected claims that it was transferring missiles. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#))

The Iraqi government’s collusion with Shiite militants dates back to after the fall of the Hussein government. In 2006, the U.N. human rights chief in Iraq reported that hundreds of Iraqis were being tortured and executed by death squads working for Iraq’s interior ministry. In February 2006, the *Independent* wrote that “many of the 110,000 policemen and police commandos under the ministry’s control are suspected of being former members of the Badr Brigade.” On November 26, 2016, the Iraqi parliament passed a bill incorporating the PMF into the Iraqi security forces. Sunni politicians condemned the law as an attempt to sideline Iraq’s Sunni community. A statement from Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi’s office called the militia members “heroic fighters” who “need our loyalty for the sacrifices they have made.” Iran’s Khamenei has called the PMF “a national treasure” and an “asset for the present and the future that should be supported.” (Sources: [Independent](#), [CNN](#), [Reuters](#), [Long War Journal](#), [Al Arabiya](#))

Formed in 2006, [Asaib Ahl al-Haq](#) (AAH) is an Iranian-backed Shiite militia and political party operating primarily in Iraq, as well as in Syria and Lebanon. Until the U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq in December 2011, AAH launched more than 6,000 attacks on American and Iraqi forces, as well as targeted kidnappings of Westerners. The group seeks to promote Iran’s political and religious influence in Iraq, maintain Shiite control over Iraq, and oust any remaining Western vestiges from the country. (Sources: [Voice of America](#), [Washington Post](#), [Middle East Security Report](#), [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#))

AAH broke away from the Mahdi Army (a.k.a. Jaysh al-Mahdi or JAM), the militia run by influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, in 2006. Following the December 2011 U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, AAH announced its intention to lay down its weapons and enter Iraqi politics. The group opened a number of political offices and religious schools and offered social services to widows and orphans. The Shiite-led Iraqi government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki reportedly welcomed AAH into politics. The group formed the political bloc al-Sadiqun (the Honest Ones) and ran under Maliki’s State of Law bloc in the April 2014 Iraqi national elections, winning one seat. Since entering politics, however, AAH has continued to carry out sectarian violence, execute homophobic attacks, and threaten the interests of Western countries participating in strikes in Syria. (Sources: [Institute for the Study of War](#), [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#), [Middle East Security Report](#), [Washington Post](#), [Reuters](#), [New York Times](#), [Guardian](#), [Jamestown Foundation](#), [Daily Mail](#), [McClatchy DC](#), [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#))

The [Badr Organization](#) is a Shiite political party and paramilitary force that acts as “Iran’s oldest proxy in Iraq,” according to Reuters. Reuters notes that the group’s military wing is considered “perhaps the single most powerful Shi’ite paramilitary group” fighting in Iraq. Given the group’s deep ties to Iran and its political and military preeminence, analysts have compared the Badr Organization in Iraq to Hezbollah in Lebanon. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Foreign Policy](#), [Reuters](#), [Globe and Mail](#))

Formed in 1983 as the Badr Brigades, the group operated out of Iran and originally served as the military wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), an Iraqi Shiite political party aimed at importing Iran’s Islamic Revolution. During the Iran-Iraq War, SCIRI’s Badr Brigades fought alongside the IRGC against the Iraqi military. After the 2003 overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the Badr Brigades rebranded itself as the Badr Organization of Reconstruction and Development, and publicly pledged to abstain from violence. Nonetheless, Badr leader Hadi al-Amiri has been accused of directly ordering attacks on up to 2,000 Sunnis between 2004 and 2006, during a Badr Organization-led sectarian war on Iraq’s Sunni population. Today, the Badr Organization and other Shiite militias are “being deployed alongside Iraqi military units as the main



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combat force” in Iraq, according to Reuters. (Sources: [Middle East Forum](#), [Foreign Policy](#), [Globe and Mail](#), [Washington Post](#), [Wikileaks](#), [Reuters](#))

[Kata'ib Hezbollah \(KH\)](#) is an Iranian-sponsored, anti-American Shiite militia formed in Iraq between 2006 and 2007. KH earned a reputation for planting deadly roadside bombs and using improvised rocket-assisted mortars to attack U.S. and coalition forces. KH is the only Iraqi Shiite militia designated as a terrorist organization by the United States. It is also reportedly the “most secretive” and elite of Iraq’s predominantly Shiite militias. KH has long-standing ties to Iran’s external military branch, the IRGC-Quds Force, as well as to Iran’s proxy in Lebanon, Hezbollah. (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#), [Reuters](#), [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#), [U.S. Government Publishing Office](#), [Foreign Policy](#), [Reuters](#))

KH has since sent fighters to defend the Assad regime in Syria, allegedly at the behest of Quds Force head Qasem Soleimani. As KH switched from fighting U.S. forces in Iraq to combating Sunni rebels and extremists in Iraq and Syria, KH has continued to prioritize its anti-American agenda, repeatedly boycotting battles against ISIS in which the United States participates. KH has also promised to target American forces if they do not fully withdraw after ISIS is defeated in Iraq. The United States held KH responsible after more than 30 missiles struck an Iraqi military base in Kirkuk on December 27, 2019, killing a U.S. contractor and wounding U.S. troops. The United States responded on December 29 by striking five KH facilities in Iraq and Syria, killing 24 members of the terror group. On December 31, members of KH joined thousands of protesters outside the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad in demanding a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. U.S. President Donald Trump held Iran responsible after a group of protesters breached the compound’s walls, though they were repelled before they could reach the embassy itself. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), [War on the Rocks](#), [New York Times](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [Wall Street Journal](#))

Founded in 2013, [Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada \(KSS\)](#) is an Iraqi militia that has fought in both Iraq and Syria and is closely connected to Iran’s IRGC. KSS follows the same global Shiite jihadist ideology as other IRGC-backed Shiite militant groups such as AAH and KH. In Syria, KSS operates within the fold of the mixed Syrian and Iraqi Liwa Abu Fadl al-Abbas, another Iranian-backed militia. Its militant activity in Syria was framed as a holy war to protect the Shiite shrine of Sayyida Zaynab, and KSS has publicly pledged its loyalty to the Houthis, indicating its support for a global Shiite armed movement. KSS has pledged an open war against the United States in Iraq. (Sources: [Jihadology](#), [Long War Journal](#), [Associated Press](#))

In January 2018, the Badr Organization, KH, and AAH joined with other PMF units to form the Fatah Alliance political party ahead of Iraq’s May 2018 elections. The alliance won 47 parliamentary seats in the election, and in June it allied with Muqtada al-Sadr’s Sairoon Alliance after Sadr’s party won the Iraq elections. On July 13, 2018, Iraqi protesters in the country’s south attacked the political offices of Badr and other Iran-backed groups as they called for Iran to withdraw from Iraq. (Sources: [Middle East Institute](#), [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [BBC News](#), [Jerusalem Post](#))

Financial and political developments in Iraq in the spring of 2020 threatened Iranian influence in the country. Former Iraqi intelligence chief Mustafa al-Kadhimi became Iraq’s transitional prime minister that May, despite opposition from Iran-backed militias. KH had threatened a violent response if parliament approved Kadhimi. Upon his ascension to the office, Kadhimi appointed an American-trained general to head the interior ministry, which had previously been staffed by leaders of Iranian militias. Kadhimi also pledged to fight against government corruption, which has helped Iran gain influence in the Iraqi government. Iran-backed militias have also used anti-corruption protests as cover for violent activities, such as KH’s December 2019 attack on the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. Between 2014 and 2018, Kadhimi helped restore Iraq’s relations with Iranian regional nemesis Saudi Arabia. He also reportedly has a close relationship with the Saudi monarchy, further threatening Iran’s continued influence in Iraqi politics. In addition, the spread of COVID-19 in Iraq and collapsing oil prices put new financial pressure on the Iraqi government to seek aid from Arab neighbors, which seek to sway Iraq away from Iran’s sphere of influence. Furthermore, Iraqi officials told the U.S. Department of State that Iranian-sponsored militias faced their own budgetary constrictions as the Iraqi government reassessed its financial priorities. (Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [Bloomberg](#), [Arab Weekly](#))

On June 25, 2020, Iraqi forces arrested 14 KH members in an anti-terrorism raid ordered by Kadhimi. The KH members were allegedly planning an attack on Baghdad’s Green Zone, which houses the U.S. Embassy and other diplomatic compounds. The following day, KH members in more than a dozen armed vehicles protested outside Kadhimi’s residence, demanding the release of their compatriots. KH called the demonstration an attempt “to prevent the situation from spinning out of control.” On June 29, citing a lack of evidence of wrongdoing, a judge within the PMF ordered the detained to be released to PMF custody for an internal trial. Following their release, the 14 KH members set fire to posters of Kadhimi, as well as U.S. and Israeli flags. KH told Iraqi media that it will never give up its weapons. (Sources: [Voice of America](#), [Jerusalem Post](#))

Ahead of an August 20, 2020, meeting with then-U.S. President Donald Trump, Kadhimi told the Associated Press that Iraq no longer needed direct military support on the ground from the United States. At the same time, the United States announced an additional \$204 million in humanitarian assistance to Iraq. In announcing assistance, then-U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo renewed the United States’ commitment to supporting Iraq’s security forces, defeating ISIS, and curbing the influence of Iran-backed militias. Following his meeting with Kadhimi, Trump announced the United States had few troops left in Iraq, but they would help Iraq in the face of Iranian aggression. Kadhimi also welcomed U.S. business

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investment in the country. The United States had more than 5,000 troops in the country at the time of the meeting. U.S. military officials said any troop drawdown would be coordinated with the Iraqi government. The United States completed its drawdown of troops in Iraq from 3,000 to 2,500 by January 15, 2021. On February 18, 2021, NATO announced it would increase its troop presence in Iraq from 500 to about 4,000. The increase comes at the request of the Iraqi government, according to NATO. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#), [Military.com](#), [Hill](#))

After the January 2020 deaths of Soleimani and KH leader Jamal Jaafar Ibrahim, a.k.a. Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes in a U.S. airstrike, the factions of the PMF fractured as they vied for influence and they have failed to unify into a cohesive force. Nonetheless, they are driven by a common narrative that the United States is unduly interfering in Iraq. The result has been an increase in attacks targeting U.S. interests. Between October 2019 and July 2020, at least 39 rocket attacks targeted American interests in Iraq. On September 9, 2020, the United States announced it would reduce its troop presence in Iraq from 5,200 to 3,000. On September 20, Pompeo informed Iraqi leaders the United States would close its embassy in Baghdad if the Iraqi government did not prevent the militias from launching attacks. Pompeo also threatened to “kill every Kata’ib Hezbollah” member as diplomatic officials leave Baghdad. According to Kadhimi, European officials had also threatened to withdraw from Baghdad if rocket attacks continued. On September 29, Kadhimi told more than two dozen foreign diplomats his government would protect their facilities from attack. PMF leader Falih al-Fayadh and Badr leader Amiri, who also heads the PMU-affiliated Fatah political bloc, joined other Iraqi politicians in condemning militant attacks on foreign diplomatic targets. Nonetheless, attacks continued in the following days as several militias rejected the ultimatum. An AAH statement called the U.S. Embassy a “military base of an occupying force” instead of a diplomatic mission. On September 30, a series of rockets struck a base near Irbil Airport in Iraqi Kurdistan used by the U.S.-led coalition. Kurdish officials blamed Shiite militias, which denied responsibility. Some Iraqi military members have anonymously told media that the only solution may be an armed confrontation between the Iraqi military and the Iran-backed militias. (Sources: [Guardian](#), [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Voice of America](#), [Al-Monitor](#))

As of May 2021, Iran was reportedly organizing new, smaller factions answering directly to the Quds Force. Through 2020, Iran recruited and trained hundreds of fighters from its various militias in Iraq to participate in the new groups. Iraqi security officials suspected the smaller groups would be less prone to infiltration and easier for Iran to control as they take orders directly from the Quds Force without any Iraqi intermediaries. The leaders and exact makeup of these new factions remained unknown to Iraqi security as of that month. Security officials credited more sophisticated recent attacks to the new forces. (Source: [Reuters](#))

While Iran is mobilizing new, smaller militias, it appears to be losing influence over its established groups in Iraq. After Soleimani’s death, Iran reportedly tasked Lebanon-based Hezbollah with uniting the Iraqi militias. The U.S.-designated Hezbollah agent [Mohammed al-Kawtharani](#) has overseen the Iran-backed Shiite militias operating in Iraq. The Associated Press reported in July 2021 that Iraqi militant commanders have also met regularly in Lebanon with Hezbollah leader [Hassan Nasrallah](#). Additionally, Iran continues to use the Quds Force to promote its agenda in Iraq. In June, Quds Force commander [Ismail Ghaani](#) reportedly met with militia leaders in Iraq to order them to maintain calm while Iran and the United States engaged in nuclear diplomacy. At least one militia leader disagreed with Ghaani’s directive, saying the militias could not stand down until they exacted revenge for the January 2020 killings of Soleimani and Mohandes. Ghaani reportedly told the leaders he understood their concerns. On June 17, AAH leader [Qais al-Khazali](#) said in a televised speech an “Iraqi” decision had been made to continue targeting the U.S. “occupier” without consideration for the nuclear talks. In addition to attempting to influence the militias, Ghaani also brought with him a letter from Khamenei chastising the PMF for its response to the May 26 arrest of PMF Anbar province commander Muslih, after which PMF members blocked roads around Baghdad’s Green Zone and surrounded government buildings, forcing the government to turn Muslih over to the PMF. The PMF released Muslim on June 9 after a judge found insufficient evidence to hold him. Khamenei said the PMF’s response weakened their position. The Quds Force has traditionally been Iran’s primary line of communications with its Iraqi proxies, but since the death of Soleimani, Iran has increasingly used its Lebanese proxy, Hezbollah, to assert its influence. In mid-July, IRGC intelligence chief Hossein Taeb led an IRGC delegation in meeting with militia leaders in Baghdad. Taeb reportedly told the militias to increase their attacks on U.S. forces after U.S. airstrikes on militia positions the previous month. Taeb also allegedly instructed the militias to expand their attacks to Syria. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [New York Times](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Middle East Eye](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#))

During a late July 2021 trip to Washington, Kadhimi requested the United States set a timetable for withdrawing from Iraq. On July 26, U.S. President Joe Biden pledged to end U.S. combat operations in Iraq by the end of the year. He said the United States would remain in a non-combat role to help Iraqi forces train and deal with ISIS. The Resistance Coordination Commission dismissed the declaration as “fraud” and “manipulation” designed to “prolong the [U.S.] hegemony.” The militants pledged to continue fighting to “purify our holy land from the abomination of the occupiers” until all U.S. troops exit Iraq. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [CNN](#), [Foreign Policy](#))

Iran-backed militias sought to consolidate their power in Iraq’s parliamentary elections on October 10, 2021, which were marked by a record low voter turnout of 41 percent. KH member and former chief of security Hussein Muanis ran under the banner of the Harakat Huquq party. He was the

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first member of KH to openly affiliate with the group in elections, leading to reports KH had officially entered Iraqi politics. KH and Huquq denied any affiliation between the two entities. Following up from its 2018 political victory, Sadr's party placed first in the elections. In a victory speech on October 11, Sadr promised a nationalist government free of foreign interference. Iran-backed parties tied to militias won fewer seats than they did in the 2018 elections. The Fatah Alliance won 14 seats, down from 48 in the previous election. Estimated results on October 12 saw Huquq win two seats. On October 12, Fatah Alliance and Badr Organization leader Hadi al-Amiri rejected the election results on behalf of Iraq's Shiite parties. He threatened to "defend the votes of our candidates and voters with full force." KH pledged to "stand firmly and insist to restore things to their rightful place." The PMF and other supporters organized protest rallies in and around Baghdad to call for a recount and denounce the United Nations, which monitored the election. Iraq's supreme court ratified the election results in late December 2021 after rejecting appeals from Iraq's Shiite parties and Iraq's new parliament convened on January 8, 2022. Despite the court's certification of the October election, a coalition of Shiite parties attempted to claim they had won the majority in the election during parliament's opening session. Iraq's political process faced further disruption in early February 2022 when Sadr's party announced it would boycott the presidential selection process because of corruption charges against Hoshiyar Zebari, the primary challenger to sitting Iraqi President Barham Saleh. The supreme court barred Zebari from running. The Shiite parties also boycotted the selection, resulting in the indefinite postponement of the presidential selection in parliament. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#), [Middle East Eye](#), [Independent](#), [Rudaw](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [National Interest](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [France 24](#), [Associated Press](#))

On August 1, 2022, media sources reported that Iraq was undergoing its longest political deadlock since 2003. According to sources, the center of the conflict revolved around Sadr and the Iran-aligned rival bloc. Sadr's parliamentary win in October 2021 proved significant as Iran-aligned Shiite blocs no longer dominated Iraqi politics, a position they held for decades. However, Sadr's nomination has created nine months of ongoing political deadlock—in June 2022, he ordered the Sadrist Movement bloc to submit its resignation to allow the second-place vote winner to take the empty seat and potentially end political gridlock—with his supporters taking to the street to prevent the formation of a new government. Sadr's supporters have staged a sit-in at Iraq's parliament and stormed Baghdad's Green Zone—a heavily fortified area that houses government buildings and Western embassies. The protests are not only against the nomination of a new prime minister, but also the Coordination Framework—the Shiite bloc of paramilitary groups and politicians aligned with Iran and opposed to Sadr. (Sources: [CNN](#), [Al Jazeera](#))

On August 29, 2022, Sadr announced his resignation from Iraqi politics, prompting his followers to storm a palatial government complex in Baghdad. Members of the Sadrist militia Saraya Salam ("Peace Brigade") violently clashed with members of the PMF and rival Shiite groups. Members of Iran-backed militias blamed the Sadrists for initiating the fighting. The fighting continued August 30 as some of Sadr's followers reportedly fired machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades into Baghdad's Green Zone. At least 30 were reportedly killed and more than 400 wounded in two days of fighting. Sadr apologized to the Iraqi people for the fighting and declared there is no revolution underway. He called on his loyalists to withdraw from Baghdad's streets. Sadr's political bloc won the most seats in Iraq's October 2021 parliamentary elections, while a bloc largely comprising Iran-backed parties won the second-largest number of seats. The parties could not agree on a governing coalition, leaving Iraq without a functioning government. On September 29, the Iraqi parliament's legal adviser declared the parliamentary speaker did not have the proper authority to accept the resignations of the 73 Sadrist parliamentarians earlier in the summer and they therefore remained members of parliament. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Guardian](#), [Associated Press](#), [BBC News](#), [Associated Press](#), [Middle East Eye](#))

The resignation of Sadr's bloc left the Coordination Framework coalition as Iraq's largest political bloc. The Coordination Framework had previously nominated Mohammed al-Sudani as prime minister. Sudani leads the Euphrates Movement, a Shiite party that won three seats in the elections. On October 13, 2022, the Iraqi parliament elected Abdul Latif Rashid as the country's new president. Rashid appointed Sudani as prime minister and gave him 30 days to form a government. Prior to the vote, at least nine rockets landed near Baghdad's Green Zone, wounding several members of the Iraqi security forces, according to a military statement. On October 17, Sudani met with U.S. Ambassador Alina Romanowski and assured the ambassador Iraq wanted to develop a strategic partnership with the United States. Sudani formed a new governing coalition on October 27. In a January 2023 interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, Sudani defended the continued U.S. presence in Iraq as necessary to continue confronting ISIS. The Iran-backed militias maintained relative calm after the new government's formation but began increasing their threats against U.S. forces in early 2023. After the formation of Sudani's new government, KSS spokesman Kadhim al-Fartousi told media the "resistance groups" were giving the new government an opportunity to effect policy changes. According to Fartousi, the resistance groups were waiting for Sudani to enact a binding decision by the Iraqi parliament to oust all foreign forces—primarily the United States—from Iraq. As of March 2023, the United States maintained 2,500 troops in Iraq. That month, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin reiterated the U.S. commitment to keeping a presence in Iraq. KH senior official Abu Ali al-Askari warned of "direct confrontation" if U.S. forces targeted Iran-backed militias. That April, KSS's Fartousi warned the Iran-backed militias were "at the peak of their readiness to expel" the United States if it did not withdraw its forces from Iraq. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Washington Post](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [IraqiNews.com](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [Mehr News Agency](#), [Tasnim News Agency](#), [Reuters](#), [The Cradle](#))

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Following the onset of the Hamas-Israel war in the Gaza Strip in October 2023, a coalition of all Iran-backed Shiite militias emerged, calling themselves the Islamic Resistance in Iraq (IRI). Established Shiite militias such as Kataib Hezbollah (KH), Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN), and Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada (KSS), as well as lesser-known militias, such as Tashkil al-Waritheen, are reportedly under the IRI umbrella. The IRI targets U.S. interests across Iraq and Syria due to the perceived U.S. role in the Gaza crisis. Following IRI's first official claim of a drone attack on Harir Air Base in Iraqi Kurdistan on October 17, 2023, the IRI launched at least 20 other attacks by the end of the month on U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria. The IRI claimed responsibility for attacks on a Telegram group called al-Elam al-Harbi (The War Media) that was launched on October 18, 2023. Between October 2023 and February 2024, security officials recorded approximately 170 attacks against U.S. and Coalition forces in Iraq and Syria, though not all have been claimed by the IRI. (Sources: [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#), [France 24](#), [CBS News](#), [Associated Press](#))

Iran's increasing influence within Iraq was further reflected in the country's provincial elections. On December 20, 2023, of the 101 seats won by Iraq's Shiite Coordination Framework, the Badr Organization and AAH won 43 seats in Iraq's provincial council elections. Of 285 total seats available, the Shiite ruling alliance now has the single-biggest share of seats, further strengthening Iran's ties to the country. (Source: [Reuters](#))

### *IRGC and Kurdish Militants*

Iran's IRGC has launched cross-border incursions into Iraq in pursuit of what it calls Kurdish militants, primarily from the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan and the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan. Both groups maintain a presence in Iraqi Kurdistan. In September 2022, widespread protests erupted in Iran in response to the September 16 death of 22-year-old Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini in custody of Tehran's morality police. The IRGC accused the Komala Party and the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan of encouraging protests within Iran. According to media sources, the opposition groups had reportedly deployed armed forces and smuggled weapons into border towns to "stoke unrest" in Iran due to ongoing protests. On September 24, 2022, the IRGC launched artillery fire on Iraq's northern Kurdistan region, targeting the Komala Party and the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan. According to media sources, the opposition groups had reportedly deployed armed forces and smuggled weapons into border towns to "stoke unrest" in Iran due to ongoing protests initiated by the Amini's death. The IRGC continued to launch missile and drone strikes in Iraqi Kurdistan throughout the week. An IRGC statement said strikes would continue until the enemy bases are dismantled and the threat is removed. On December 3, Second Brigadier General Delavar Ranjbarzadeh told Lebanese media the IRGC would continue to push back against terrorists attempting to infiltrate Iran from Iraqi Kurdistan. Among those killed in the September strikes was Iran-born U.S. citizen Omar "Chicho" Mahmoudzadeh. On March 6, 2023, Mahmoudzadeh's family filed a lawsuit against Iran in the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., accusing the IRGC of an "organized, tactical operation intended to target Kurdish, Iranian civilians and refugees." (Sources: [Bloomberg](#), [Iran International](#), [Iran Wire](#), [Press TV](#), [Iran International](#), [Tasnim News Agency](#), [Mehr News Agency](#), [Iran International](#))

In August 2023, the Iraqi and Iranian governments formalized an agreement to dismantle Iranian Kurdish dissident factions and in northern Iraq and relocate them from their bases near the Iranian border. According to the Iranian foreign ministry, the two governments set a September 19, 2023, deadline for Iraq to remove the alleged Kurdish militants. Ahead of the deadline, IRGC leaders issued threats their forces would resume attacking Kurdish positions in Iraq if the Iraqi government did not hold to that deadline. Ahead of the deadline, Iraq reportedly began relocating Kurds from the border areas to camps further in Iraqi Kurdistan. On September 19, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein reportedly said the Kurdish opposition had turned over their heavy weaponry. (Sources: [Iran International](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Reuters](#))

### *Foreign Fighters*

ISIS-occupied Iraq has been a destination for foreign fighters since 2014. The flow of foreign fighters into Iraq slowed as ISIS continued to lose control of territory in the country. By September 2016, the flow of foreign fighters crossing the Syria-Turkey border had decreased from 2,000 per month to 50. Given ISIS's loss of territory, U.S. officials reported in June 2016 that ISIS had shifted its messaging to encourage would-be foreign fighters to instead remain and carry out attacks in their home countries. (Sources: [Washington Post](#), [Soufan Group](#), [Washington Times](#))

Thousands of Iraqi Shiite militia fighters, including factions from the Popular Mobilization Forces, reportedly crossed the Syrian border in 2016 and 2017 to fight ISIS and aid Syrian government forces in the Syrian Civil War. One Iraqi Shiite militia, Harakat Nujaba, claimed that it sent 2,000 fighters to join the battle for Aleppo in August 2016. In April 2017, Iraqi Shiite militia fighters reportedly crossed the Syrian border to fight ISIS in the al-Hiri area of eastern Syria, but were pushed back into Iraq. In the same battle, the Iraqi Shiite militia Kata'ib Hezbollah reportedly fired rockets into Syria from across the Iraqi border. (Sources: [Rudaw](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Los Angeles Times](#), [Reuters](#))

As of December 2021, there were approximately 2,000 Iraqi foreign fighters held in Syrian refugee camps administered by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). There were approximately 30,000 Iraqis—primarily women and children—in Syria's al-Hol refugee camp alone. The Kurdish-run

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camp is the largest of Syria's refugee camps, hosting approximately 55,000 people. Kurdish authorities continue to act against ISIS insurgents within al-Hol while calling on countries to repatriate their citizens. The U.S. Department of State accuses the Iraqi government of making "no significant efforts" to repatriate Iraqi women and children held in Syrian refugee camps. In February 2019, the Iraqi government reached an agreement with the SDF to accept 502 foreign fighters back into the country. The first transfer took place that month with 150 fighters returned to Iraq. Iraq took custody of two more batches of foreign fighters from the SDF that September and December. In October 2022, Iraq accepted the transfer of 659 people from al-Hol as part of the repatriation of 161 families. Iraq expected to repatriate 500 families in total from al-Hol in 2022. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Kurdistan 24](#), [Kurdistan 24](#), [Arab News](#), [Agence France-Presse](#))

### **Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents**

The Institute for Economics & Peace's 2020 Global Terrorism Index (GTI) ranked Iraq the second-most impacted country by terrorism behind Afghanistan in 2019. Iraq had previously been the most-affected country between 2004 and 2017 until Afghanistan became the most afflicted in 2018. The GTI recorded 495 terrorist incidents in Iraq in 2019, resulting in 564 deaths and 1,029 wounded. The death toll represented a decline of 46 percent from the previous year's 1,054 and the third-largest recorded decline that year among countries in the report. It was the first time since 2003 that the death count fell below 1,000. (Source: [Institute for Economics & Peace](#))

#### *ISIS*

ISIS began capturing Iraqi territory in January 2014 when it seized control of Fallujah, Iraq. In June 2014, ISIS captured Iraq's second largest city, Mosul, followed by the city of Tikrit. From June to September of that year, ISIS carried out "ethnic cleansing on a historic scale in northern Iraq... systematically target[ing] non-Arab and non-Sunni Muslim communities, killing or abducting hundreds, possibly thousands, and forcing more than 830,000 others to flee the areas it has captured," according to Amnesty International. ISIS has continued to launch suicide bombings and other terrorist attacks against Iraqi government and civilian targets, particularly against Shiite mosques and religious symbols. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Amnesty International](#), [BBC News](#), [CNN](#), [Washington Post](#))

Though U.S.-backed Iraqi forces have liberated all of the territory that ISIS captured in Iraq, the terror group has continued to pose a security threat in liberated territories. For example, ISIS claimed the December 11, 2016, double car bombings in Fallujah six months after Iraqi forces liberated the city. ISIS also continues to send suicide bombers into Baghdad and other government-held areas of the country. In October 2016, Iraqi forces began a campaign to liberate Mosul from ISIS. The terror group responded with bombings, ambushes, and other violence during the months-long campaign. (Sources: [CNN](#), [Associated Press](#), [Associated Press](#), [Global Coalition Against Daesh](#), [Washington Post](#), [CNN](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#))

After announcing the liberation of Mosul on July 10, 2017, government officials expected ISIS to continue insurgent-style attacks throughout Iraq. Even as ISIS has lost territory, the group has continued to target Iraqi forces and civilians. ISIS claimed an April 4, 2017, attack in Tikrit that killed at least 31 people. The attack was one in a string of bombings throughout 2017 that killed at least 150 people. In each case, ISIS has either claimed responsibility or Iraqi authorities suspect the terror group of orchestrating the attacks. On April 21, 2022, a criminal court in Anbar, western Iraq, sentenced four men to death by hanging on charges related to terrorism. The defendants—who were reportedly affiliated with ISIS—set off a car bomb in Ramadi in September 2020 that wounded six people. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#), [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Barron's](#))

#### *Shiite Militia Attacks*

The Iraqi government created the Shiite Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF)—Iraq's 110,000-plus anti-ISIS volunteer forces—in June 2014 to combat the jihadist threat throughout the country. However, the forces, which include Iran-linked militia groups such as Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), the Badr Organization, and Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) are driven by a common narrative that the United States is unduly interfering in Iraq. Given that narrative, factions of the PMF began launching attacks on U.S. targets in October 2019. On January 3, 2020, a U.S. airstrike killed Soleimani and KH leader [Jamal Jaafar Ibrahim](#), a.k.a. Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes. KH joined other Iran-backed Iraqi militias in vowing revenge against the United States. The United States held KH responsible for multiple rocket attacks on Baghdad on January 4 and January 5 that wounded at least six. Attacks continued, and in March 2020, suspected Iranian-backed militias launched rocket attacks on Camp Taji north of Baghdad, killing three—two Americans and one British soldier—and wounding 14 others. The United States launched retaliatory airstrikes on KH weapons facilities. In response to ongoing attacks by Iran-backed militias, the Pentagon in late March 2020 reportedly ordered U.S. military commanders in Iraq to draw up plans to

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target and destroy KH. (Sources: [Washington Post](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [CNN](#), [U.S. Department of Defense](#), [Voice of America](#), [Associated Press](#), [BBC News](#))

Beginning in the spring of 2020, new Iran-backed militias appeared to emerge and claim responsibility for attacks against U.S. interests in Iraq. Media analysts, however, reported that claims of responsibility by these groups appeared to be doctored or outright false. In May, Tha'r al-Muhandis Brigade ("Vengeance of al-Muhandis") released a video of a rocket attack on American helicopters, but media producers determined the video to be a montage of older footage. Other new groups participating in this reportedly fake campaign included Osbat al-Tha'irin, Ghabdhat al-Huda, Kata'ib Thourat al-Ishrin II, and Ashab al-Kahf. Ashab al-Kahf ("Companions of the Cave") first issued a threat against U.S. forces in April 2020. The group later claimed responsibility for an attack on a military convoy in July 2020 in the Salaheddin province. Ashab al-Kahf also claimed responsibility for an August 11 bombing of a U.S. convoy along the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border, but Iraqi, Kuwaiti, and U.S. sources denied the incident took place. Following the July attack, Iranian media reported that U.S. forces had no choice but to withdraw from Iraq. Foreign policy and media analysts in Iraq and the United States asserted that the video clips these groups are producing appear to originate from the same source and are meant to present an image that Iran-backed groups are still seeking revenge for the attack that killed Soleimani and Mohandes. Ashab al-Kahf initially claimed responsibility for a barrage of rockets targeting the U.S. Embassy on November 17, 2020. However, KH and the Fatah Coalition issued a statement denying any responsibility or connection between the rocket attack and Shiite militias after it became public that the rockets had killed an Iraqi child. (Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Associated Press](#), [Mehr News Agency](#), [Voice of America](#))

After the January 2020 deaths of Soleimani and Muhandis, the factions of the PMF fractured as they vied for influence, and they have failed to unify into a cohesive force. The result led to an increase in attacks targeting U.S. interests. Between October 2019 and July 2020, at least 39 rocket attacks targeted American interests in Iraq. Given the attacks, on September 9, 2020, the United States announced it would reduce its troop presence in Iraq from 5,200 to 3,000. On September 20, U.S. then Secretary of State Mike Pompeo informed Iraqi leaders the United States would close its embassy in Baghdad if the Iraqi government did not prevent the militias from launching attacks. Pompeo also threatened to "kill every Kata'ib Hezbollah" member as diplomatic officials leave Baghdad. According to Kadhimi, European officials had also threatened to withdraw from Baghdad if rocket attacks continued. On September 29, Kadhimi told more than two dozen foreign diplomats his government would protect their facilities from attack. PMF leader Falih al-Fayadh and Badr leader Amiri, who also heads the PMU-affiliated Fatah political bloc, joined other Iraqi politicians in condemning militant attacks on foreign diplomatic targets. Nonetheless, attacks continued in the following days as several militias rejected the ultimatum. An AAH statement called the U.S. Embassy a "military base of an occupying force" instead of a diplomatic mission. On September 30, a series of rockets struck a base near Irbil Airport in Iraqi Kurdistan used by the U.S.-led coalition. Kurdish officials blamed Shiite militias, which denied responsibility. Some Iraqi military members have anonymously told media that the only solution may be an armed confrontation between the Iraqi military and the Iran-backed militias. (Sources: [Guardian](#), [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Voice of America](#), [Al-Monitor](#))

On October 10, 2020, representatives from various militias, calling themselves the Iraqi Resistance Coordination Commission, published a joint statement agreeing to suspend attacks in exchange for the Iraqi government presenting a plan for a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. The following day, KH and other militias announced their agreement to suspend attacks on U.S. interests on the condition the Iraqi government works toward a full U.S. withdrawal from the country. Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei reportedly ordered the factions to stand down. A KH spokesman also promised renewed violence if the United States chose to remain in Iraq. The joint statement did not set a deadline for an Iraqi plan of action, but the KH spokesman called for a parliamentary resolution by January 2021. On November 17, the United States announced it would reduce its forces in Iraq from 3,000 to 2,500 by January 15, 2021. On December 9, 2021, The United States ended its combat mission in Iraq. Approximately 2,500 U.S. forces remained in the country acting in a training and advisory role to Iraqi forces. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Middle East Eye](#), [CNBC](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Military Times](#), [The Hill](#))

On December 10, 2020, it was reported that Iranian-aligned proxies in Iraq have conducted more than 50 rocket attacks on bases where U.S. troops are housed. The targets included the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and convoys carrying supplies to American troops. On December 20, the U.S. Embassy was targeted again, resulting in one civilian casualty. The Iraqi military claimed an "outlaw group" fired eight rockets, but Iran-backed militia groups, including KH, denounced the attack. Between January 1 and January 3, 2021, members of AAH and KH threatened Kadhimi, leading the Iraqi judiciary to issue arrest warrants for senior KH leader Abu Ali al-Askari and two other KH members. The AAH members claimed they were awaiting permission from the group's leadership before carrying out violence against Kadhimi. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Arab Weekly](#))

Hours before a March 15, 2021, rocket attack on an Iraqi airbase hosting U.S. forces, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations denied his country's support for any armed attack on U.S. interests in Iraq. In a letter to U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the rotating president of the U.N. Security Council, Iranian U.N. Ambassador Majid Takht-Ravanchi said Iran "has not been directly or indirectly involved in any armed attack against any US individual or body in Iraq." (Source: [Jerusalem Post](#))

In mid May 2021, the Iraqi Resistance Coordination Commission, which coordinated the October 2020 truce announcement, began threatening to resume attacks because of disappointment with the pace of the U.S. withdrawal. On May 24, the commission declared they were ending the

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unofficial truce they had announced in October 2020 and would resume attacks on U.S. forces. The militias made the decision because of “the lack of seriousness of the Iraqi and US governments in scheduling the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq,” one commander told international media. That same day, three missiles targeted the Ain al-Asad airbase in Anbar province. At least one missile landed inside the base, but no casualties were reported. That month, Iraqi security recorded at least four attacks on the Ain al-Asad airbase. On May 26, Iraqi forces arrested Qasim Muslih, the PMF commander in Anbar province. On June 27, U.S. forces launched airstrikes against weapons and storage facilities along the Iraq-Syria border used by Iran-backed militias. The PMF denied the strikes targeted weapons storehouses and claimed they instead targeted PMF fighters. The PMF promised to “make the enemy taste the bitterness of revenge.” The Iraqi government condemned the U.S. airstrikes as a violation of Iraqi sovereignty. KSS promised an open war with the United States, which would begin by targeting U.S. planes in Iraqi airspace. The Iranian Foreign Ministry accused the United States of disrupting regional security with the strikes. (Sources: [National](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Middle East Eye](#), [CNN](#), [U.S. Department of Defense](#), [New York Times](#))

According to the U.S. government, specific targets of weapons and storage facilities used by Iran-backed militias were chosen because they were connected to unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks against U.S. personnel and facilities in Iraq. The U.S. strikes targeted drone facilities used by Iraqi militias, which have increasingly used armed drones to strike against U.S. and Iraqi military targets. The U.S. military has warned Iraqi militias are turning to drones, which can fly below the detection range of aerial defensive systems. Iraqi militias have promised to continue striking at U.S. targets in Iraq as long as the United States maintains its military presence in the country. In an exclusive interview with the Associated Press on July 5, 2021, KSS leader Abu Waala al Wa’eli vowed to avenge the deaths of four KSS fighters in a U.S. airstrike in June. Wa’eli promised “an operation in which everyone says they have taken revenge on the Americans.” (Sources: [Washington Post](#), [Associated Press](#))

Following a November 7, 2021, drone attack on Kadhimi’s Baghdad home and wounded several of Kadhimi’s security personnel, suspicions fell on KH and AAH. The militias denied responsibility, while Iran also denied its involvement or the involvement of its proxies. Reports emerged of fractures between Iran and its proxies. AAH and KH have reportedly openly defied orders from Ghaani. Militia leaders allegedly told the Iranians that Tehran’s support for Kadhimi receiving a second term in office broke the allies’ bond. Further, some security analysts in Iraq alleged Ghaani has lost control over the Iraqi militias. In response to the November 7 drone attack, on November 18 Sadr called on all Iraqi militias to disband and turn over their weapons to the state. Sadr told the militias they must “step back in order to regain trust the trust of the people.” Sadr also called on the PMF to purge “undisciplined elements.” In response to Sadr, KH disbanded its Saraya al-Difa al-Shaabi (Popular Defense Brigades). KH said former members of the brigade would be transferred to the PMF. (Sources: [Middle East Eye](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [Reuters](#), [Rudaw](#))

Despite the call to disband and turn over their weapons to the state, in February 2022, KH reportedly increased their attacks on enemies in both Iraq and outside of the country. On February 3, Alwaiyat al-Waad al-Haq—which is allegedly a front group for KH or affiliated with the group—launched a drone attack on the UAE. Although KH has been deployed in Qaim, a city on Iraq’s border with Syria, the group is generally disliked by the local population. According to media sources, Iran-backed Iraqi militia groups continue to support the Houthis in Yemen. KH has donated to the militant group, and in January 2022, KH reportedly launched a fundraising campaign to help the Houthi movement acquire more drones. According to the militia groups, the UAE interferes in Iraqi politics and lends their support to Sunni Iraqi parties. (Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Rudaw](#), [Washington Institute](#))

In May 2022, the Pentagon published a report that revealed the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) militant group is coordinating with Iran-backed militia groups in northern Iraq. The PKK is a designated terrorist organization by the United States and Turkey. According to the report, Iran-backed militias have increased their attacks against Turkish forces in Iraq and Syria as a way to increase their legitimacy in Iraq’s Kurdistan region. (Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Department of Defense](#))

Iran-backed militias continued to pose a threat to U.S. forces in Iraq through 2024. On January 4, 2024, the U.S. military launched an airstrike on Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba’s (HHN) logistics headquarters in central Baghdad. The strike killed and injured several members, including high-ranking official Mushtaq Taleb al-Saidi. Also known as Abu Taqwa, al-Saidi served as the deputy head of operations of the Popular Mobilization Units in Baghdad as well as HHN commander. Al-Saidi was “actively involved in planning and carrying out attacks against,” the U.S. military in the region. Since the outbreak of the Hamas-Israel war in the Gaza Strip in October 2023, Iran-backed militias called the Islamic Resistance of Iraq, have reportedly carried out regular attacks on U.S. military bases in retaliation for U.S. President Joe Biden’s support of Israel. HHN is considered one of the strongest factions of the IRI. Between October 2023 and February 2024, security officials recorded approximately 170 attacks against U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq and Syria, though not all were claimed by the IRI. (Sources: [Financial Times](#), [Kurdistan 24](#), [CBS News](#), [Associated Press](#))

On February 4, 2024, the IRI launched a drone strike from Iraq on a Syrian military base hosting U.S. troops in Deir Ezzor, Syria. Although no American casualties were reported, the attack at al-Omar base killed at least six allied Kurdish soldiers. The IRI called the strike a response to recent U.S. strikes against Iran-backed militant groups in eastern Syria and western Iraq, as well as Houthi militant targets in Yemen. On February 2, 2024,

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the United States carried out multiple strikes against Iran-backed forces across Syria and Iraq. The strikes hit more than 85 targets including command and control operations, intelligence centers, weapons facilities, and bunkers used by the IRGC-QF as well as their affiliated militia groups. Nearly 40 people were killed in the strikes. (Sources: [Fox News](#), [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#))

In March 2024, the IRI reportedly launched the second phase of an undisclosed operation to support Hamas. On March 1, the IRI claimed responsibility for targeting a chemical materials depot in the Port of Haifa in northern Israel. A similar IRI strike targeted Ben-Gurion Airport in Israel on March 12. Shortly afterwards on March 21, the IRI reportedly launched a drone attack targeting a power plant in Tel Aviv. In all instances of the IRI's second phase campaign against Israel, no casualties were reported, and no further evidence was released verifying the IRI's claims. (Sources: [Middle East Monitor](#), [i24 News](#), [Jerusalem Post](#))

- **April 21, 2024 - April 22, 2024:** On April 21, Iraqi militants in Zummar launch five rockets toward a U.S. military base in Rumalyn, Syria. No U.S. personnel are injured in the attack. A U.S. official calls the launch a “failed rocket attack” in an interview with Reuters. Fighter jets from the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and Syria launch a counterstrike, destroying a rocket launcher-equipped pickup truck in Zummar. A KH-affiliated group on Telegram announces that KH and other Iraqi militias are resuming their attacks on U.S. forces. The KH-linked Sabreen News group on Telegram reports that KH had not issued an official statement. On April 22, KH issues a statement on Telegram denying reports that it would resume violent attacks on U.S. forces. KH calls the reports “fabricated news.” According to Pentagon press secretary Major General Patrick Ryder, the April 21 incident resulted from “some type of malfunction” in which a rocket-launching truck was “shooting rockets all over the place.” Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Al-Monitor](#)
- **April 14, 2024:** Iraqi militias join Iranian and Houthi forces in simultaneously launching hundreds of rockets, drones, and missiles against Israel in retaliation for an April 1 airstrike on Iran’s consulate in Damascus. Despite Iran launching more than 300 drones and missiles in its first-ever direct attack against Israel, 99 percent are intercepted by Israeli, U.S., U.K., and regional forces. The projectiles that do reach Israeli territory cause minimal damage to an air base and wound a child in south Israel. The April 1 strike killed seven military advisers from the IRGC Quds Force. Citing security risks, Iraq briefly closes its airspace on April 13 before reopening on April 14. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [U.S. News & World Report](#), [Times of Israel](#)
- **April 9, 2024:** The IRI issues two statements via its Telegram channel claiming responsibility for five attacks on Israeli sites within 72 hours. Three attacks reportedly included “a vital target in Ashkelon settlement; Ashkelon oil terminal; [and] vital targets in our occupied lands [meaning Israel].” Two other attacks reportedly target the Hazerim Air Base in Beersheba. No casualties are reported. Source: [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#)
- **March 27, 2024:** In an interview with *Newsweek*, Sheikh Mohammed al-Tamimi, secretary-general of IRI affiliate Faylaq al-Waad al-Sadiq, claims his forces will escalate their campaign against U.S. troops if the militia’s demands are not met. Tamimi threatens increased defensive capabilities via drones and long-range smart missiles if the U.S. does not withdraw from Iraq. Source: [Newsweek](#)
- **March 21, 2024:** The IRI launches a drone attack targeting a power plant in Tel Aviv, Israel. No casualties are reported. According to pro-Iran Tasnim news media, the attack was reportedly part of the second phase of an undisclosed IRI operation to support Hamas. Source: [Jerusalem Post](#)
- **March 12, 2024:** The IRI allegedly launches a drone strike targeting Ben-Gurion Airport in Israel, though there is no reported evidence to support the claim. The Iranian state-owned Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) claims the attack was part of the second phase of an undisclosed IRI operation to support Hamas. Source: [i24 News](#)
- **March 1, 2024:** The IRI claims responsibility for targeting a chemical materials depot in the Port of Haifa in northern Israel as part of a continuing campaign against Israel. No casualties are reported, and no further evidence is released verifying the IRI’s claims. Source: [Middle East Monitor](#)
- **February 7, 2024:** The United States carries out a precision drone strike in Baghdad, killing three, including KH commander Abu Baqir Al-Saadi. Al-Saadi oversaw KH’s operations in Syria and was reportedly responsible for planning and participating in attacks on American troops in the region. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **February 4, 2024:** The IRI launch a drone strike from Iraq on the al-Omar military base in Deir Ezzor, Syria, killing at least six allied Kurdish soldiers. The base hosts U.S. forces but no American casualties are reported. Source: [Fox News](#)
- **January 15, 2024:** Iran’s Revolutionary Guards launch missiles targeting an Israeli “spy headquarters” in Irbil, northern Iraq, as well as ISIS elements in northern Syria. The Irbil strike occurs near the U.S. consulate, killing four civilians and injuring six. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **January 4, 2024:** The U.S. military launches an air strike on Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba’s (HHN) logistics headquarters in central Baghdad. The strike kills and injures several members, including high-ranking official Mushtaq Taleb al-Saidi. Also known as Abu Taqwa, al-Saidi served as the deputy head of operations in Baghdad of the Popular Mobilization Units as well as HHN commander. Al-Saidi was “actively involved in planning and carrying out attacks against,” the U.S. military in the region. Since the outbreak of the Hamas-Israel war in the Gaza Strip in October 2023, Iran-backed militias called the Islamic Resistance of Iraq, have reportedly carried out over 100 attacks on US military bases in retaliation for U.S. President Joe Biden’s support of Israel. HHN is considered one of the strongest factions of the IRI. Source: [Financial Times](#)



## *Iraq: Extremism and Terrorism*

- **December 30, 2023:** Suspected Iran-backed Shiite militias launch two “suicide drone” attacks on the key headquarters of Peshmerga forces in Pirmam, Irbil.  
According to the Kurdistan Regional government, the attacks are a dangerous development as the militias were thought to only target coalition forces. No casualties are reported. Source: [Voice of America](#)
- **December 27, 2023:** The IRI launch a drone attack against U.S. and coalition forces at Irbil Air Base.  
No damage or casualties are reported. Source: [Kurdistan 24](#)
- **December 25, 2023:** The IRI launches a drone attack on Harir base in Irbil, wounding three U.S. personnel.  
The United States retaliates with airstrikes on facilities in Iraq used by KH and affiliated groups. According to the Iraqi government, the U.S. strikes kill one “serviceman” from the PMU and injure 18 others. Sources: [National](#), [ABC News](#), [CNN](#)
- **December 20, 2023:** Of the 101 seats won by Iraq’s Shiite Coordination Framework , the Badr Organization and AAH win 43 seats in Iraq’s provincial council elections.  
Of 285 total seats available, the Shiite ruling alliance has the single-biggest share of seats, signaling neighboring Iran’s growing influence within Iraq. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **December 8, 2023:** Following a multi-mortar attack on the U.S. Embassy compound in Baghdad, U.S. and coalition forces are targeted twice more in Iraq in a mix of rocket and drone attacks.  
No casualties are reported. KSS commander Abu Alaa al-Walaei vows to launch more attacks on U.S. interests in Iraq. Although he does not claim responsibility for the strikes, al-Walaei asserts that KSS rejects “talk[s] about stopping or easing operations as long as Zionist crimes continue in Gaza and the American occupation continues in Iraq.” Source: [CNN](#)
- **November 17, 2023:** The U.S. Department of State designates KSS and its Secretary-General Hashmin Finyan Rahim al-Saraji as a Specially Designated National (SDN) and Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT), respectively.  
The United States accuses KSS and al-Saraji of threatening the lives of U.S. and Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS personnel across Iraq and Syria, among other crimes. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)
- **November 1, 2023:** HHN Secretary-General Akram Al-Kaabi releases a statement on X, formerly Twitter, claiming the “Iraqi Islamic resistance...[will] militarily liberate Iraq.... What is to come will be grandiose. Blessed are the heroic mujahideen, blessed are the participants, blessed are the supporters. Victory for Islam. No stopping, no truce, no retreat.”  
The statement has been equated to HHN declaring war against U.S. forces in Iraq. Source: [Middle East Media Research Institute](#)
- **October 30, 2023:** A Hamas delegation led by Osama Hamdan—one of the group’s senior leaders and representative in Lebanon—meets AAH leader Qais Al Khazali in Baghdad.  
Hamdan also meets with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq (IRI), a coalition of Iraqi Shiite militias aligned with Iran. The meetings were reportedly an effort to “muster support and to update the major players in the region on the ongoing developments” of the Hamas-Israel war. Source: [National](#)
- **October 26, 2023:** Iran-backed militias launch a drone strike at Irbil air base, crashing into barracks housing American troops.  
The drone fails to detonate and leaves one U.S. service member with a concussion. The strike is one of 40 attacks against U.S. forces launched by Iran-backed militias in three weeks. U.S. air defenses in Iraq and Syria have intercepted most of the rockets and drones. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **October 17, 2023:** Two Shiite militias launch drone attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq, however, both are repelled with no casualties reported.  
One attack targeting U.S. forces at Harir Airbase in Irbil is initially claimed by an unknown Shiite militia called Tashkil al-Waritheen. However, the group retracts its claim after the IRI supersedes the announcement with its own claim of responsibility. The IRI claims the other attack at Ain Al Asad Airbase in Anbar. Sources: [Long War Journal](#), [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#)
- **October 9, 2023:** Following the onset of the Hamas-Israel war in the Gaza Strip, KSS releases a statement warning it will target the entire America presence in the region if the United States intervenes in the Gaza war.  
Source: [National](#)
- **September 18, 2023:** An armed Turkish drone attacks the Arbat airport in northern Iraq, killing three members of the Counter-Terrorism Group, an Iraqi Kurdish counterterrorism taskforce based at the airport.  
The taskforce is affiliated to the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, which Turkey accuses of working with the YPG in Syria. Iraqi officials call the strike a violation of Iraq’s sovereignty and call on Turkey to halt such attacks. Stephane Dujarric, spokesperson for U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, calls for respect for Iraq’s territorial integrity. Sources: [New York Times](#), [Rudaw](#)
- **September 15, 2023:** Unidentified gunmen open fire on the car of Sheikh Saeed al-Mashhadani, leader of the al-Mashhadani tribe, while he is on his way to his farm in a village in Tarmiyah.  
One individual in the car is killed while Mashhadani is wounded. Police later discover the body of a farmer, who they say was killed by the militant gunfire. Police reportedly believe the attackers belonged to ISIS. Source: [Xinhua](#)
- **September 4, 2023:** An explosion targets a Turkish military position in Iraqi Kurdistan, killing one Turkish soldier and wounding another.  
According to the PKK-affiliated Firat News Agency, the targeted five Turkish army positions, killing four other soldiers in the Zap region. Source: [The Cradle](#)
- **September 3, 2023:** Alleged Iran-backed militants clash with Kurds in Kirkuk, leaving four Kurds dead and 15 people wounded.  
The clashes followed an Iraqi federal supreme court ruling obligating the Iraqi government to delay handing over a building to the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). The Iraqi military used the building as a base since 2017, but it was previously the KDP’s headquarters. Iraqi security forces deploy around Kirkuk in response to the clashes. Protesters against the handover of the building set up tents around it on September 3, leading to the clashes. The protesters reportedly consist largely of AAH members and supporters. Source: [Iran International](#)
- **August 30, 2023:** Militants fire multiple rockets toward the Khor Mor gas field in the Sulaimaniya region of northern Iraq.  
Two rockets land near the field’s perimeter. No casualties or damage are reported. Source: [Reuters](#)

## *Iraq: Extremism and Terrorism*

- **August 29, 2023:** The Iraqi military launches an airstrike on an ISIS position in the Salahuddin province. French and Iraqi helicopters land at the site after the strike and are ambushed by ISIS militants, resulting in a four-hour firefight that leaves one Iraqi soldier dead and three French soldiers and five Iraqi soldiers wounded. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **August 9, 2023 - August 10, 2023:** Turkish forces clash with the PKK in Iraq's Zap region, leaving at least six Turkish soldiers dead. The Turkish military responds with attacks on PKK positions that kill at least four PKK fighters. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **July 20, 2023:** Protesters demonstrating against a planned burning of a Quran in front of the Iraqi embassy in Stockholm, Sweden, storm the Swedish embassy in Baghdad and set it on fire. The Quran burning in Stockholm is organized by Iraqi refugee Salwan Momika, who had burned a Quran in front of Stockholm's largest mosque on June 28. The protesters in Iraq are followers of Sadr, whose followers had stormed the Swedish embassy following the June 28 incident. The Swedish foreign ministry press office calls on Iraq to protect diplomatic missions. Iraq expels the Swedish ambassador and recalls its charge d'affaires in Sweden. Iraq also suspends the working permit of Swedish telecom company Ericsson on Iraqi soil. On July 21, Sweden announces it will temporarily relocate its embassy to Stockholm. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [Al Jazeera](#)
- **June 28, 2023 - June 29, 2023:** Following the June 28 burning of the Quran by Iraqi refugee Salwan Momika in front of Stockholm's largest mosque, protesters storm the Swedish embassy in Baghdad on June 29. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **June 21, 2023:** The Higher Regional Court of Koblenz in Germany sentences former ISIS member Nadine K. to nine years and three months imprisonment for aiding and abetting genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes during her time in Iraq and Syria. While in Mosul, Iraq in 2016, Nadine K. and her husband enslaved and severely abused a young woman belonging to Iraq's Yazidi minority community. Source: [CNN](#)
- **June 10, 2023:** ISIS militants ambush an army position in Kirkuk, killing two soldiers and wounding three others. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **May 23, 2023:** A Turkish airstrike kills three Yazidi militiamen and wounds three others in northern Iraq's Sinjar district. The strike reportedly targeted a meeting of high-ranking Shingal Resistance Units (YBS) leaders meeting at the YBS headquarters in the village of Chumu-Khalaf. A statement from Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar claims the Turkish military had "neutralized 126 terrorists" in the past month. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **May 15, 2023:** Alleged KH gunmen clash with Iraqi security forces in the Al-Buaita neighborhood, southwest of Baghdad. Media reports give conflicting accounts of the confrontation. According to one report, the engagement began when militants insisted on owning some agricultural land in the area. According to other reports, police raided a KH oil smuggling site. Source: [Arab News](#)
- **May 4, 2023:** Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (MIT) announces it had "neutralized" PKK senior member Ahmet Gümü?, a.k.a. "Cudi Engizek," in Iraq's Gara region. According to the MIT, Gümü? had commanded the PKK's so-called "Apollo Academies" in northern Iraq and was one of the group's best assassins. Source: [Daily Sabah](#)
- **April 7, 2023:** A Turkish drone strike targets a convoy carrying Syrian Democratic Forces leader Mazloum Abdi and U.S. military personnel near the Suleimaniya International Airport in Iraqi Kurdistan, causing a small fire but no casualties. The SDF and the Kurdish regional government in northeast Syria deny Abdi was in Suleimaniya at the time or had been targeted. The Iraqi presidency accuses Turkey of "terrorizing" Iraqis and calls for Turkey to issue a formal apology. Iraq demands Turkey halt all military operations in Iraqi territory. Turkey denies it had carried out any military operations that day. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Associated Press](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [Reuters](#)
- **March 30, 2023:** Israeli-Russian academic Elizabeth Tsurkov is kidnapped in Baghdad after leaving a cafe. Her last social media post is dated March 21. In July, Israeli Prime Minister accuses KH of holding her hostage. Tsurkov is a doctoral student at Princeton University who was conducting research in Iraq. According to unnamed Arab sources in Israeli media, Tsurkov initiated contact with her kidnappers as part of her research. She entered Iraq using her Russian passport. A statement from Tsurkov's family holds the Iraqi government responsible for her safety. Sources: [Reuters](#), [New York Times](#), [Times of Israel](#)
- **March 14, 2023:** A group of KH militants engage in a firefight with the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) at Iraq's Camp Speicher. KH shoots and wounds two CTS soldiers and burns multiple CTS vehicles. Source: [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#)
- **March 6, 2023:** After an IED targets a car in the village of Hazaniyah in Diyala province, unidentified gunmen open fire at civilians at the explosion site, killing at least four and wounding three others. Source: [Iraq News](#)
- **February 16, 2023:** Four Iraqi soldiers are killed during a counterterrorism raid on an ISIS hideout in Tarmiya when one of the militants detonates an explosives belt. According to the Iraqi government, two other terrorists are also killed. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **February 3, 2023 - March 6, 2023:** Iraqi soldiers kill 22 ISIS fighters during a counterterrorism operation in Iraq's western desert. According to Iraq's Counter Terrorism Service, the ISIS fatalities include field leaders Al Janoob, Rokan Hameed Allawi, and former ISIS governor of Fallujah Barzan Hussein. Source: [National](#)
- **February 1, 2023:** At least eight rockets are fired at Turkey's Zilkan military base in Nineveh province. Two rockets hit the base, but no damage or casualties are reported. Iran-backed Liwa Ahrar al-Iraq claims responsibility. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **January 25, 2023:** The Iraqi Ministry of the Interior announces security forces had disrupted a plan by three ISIS suicide bombers to target the Nineveh Court of Appeal. Source: [Iraqi News](#)

***Iraq: Extremism and Terrorism***

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- **January 17, 2023:** Suspected ISIS militants attack a security checkpoint in Iraq’s Kirkuk province, killing two Kurdish police officers.  
Source: [Kurdistan 24](#)
  - **December 21, 2022:** Suspected ISIS militants ambush an Iraqi military patrol near Kirkuk, killing two soldiers and wounding three others. There is no immediate claim of responsibility, but officials suspect ISIS. Iraq’s air force executes airstrikes against an alleged ISIS hideout in Nineveh province, killing five militants. Source: [Wall Street Journal](#)
  - **December 19, 2022:** Suspected ISIS gunmen kill at least eight civilians and wound nine others in the village of Albu Bali in the town of Khalis, Diyala province.  
ISIS is suspected. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#), [Reuters](#)
  - **December 18, 2022:** A bomb targets a federal police convoy near the village of Safra, southwest of Kirkuk, killing at least nine Iraqi federal police officers and wounding two.  
Following the explosion, police report “a direct attack with small arms” near the village of Chalal al-Matar. Police kill one of the assailants and begin a search for the others. ISIS claims responsibility over Telegram. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Middle East Eye](#)
  - **December 14, 2022:** A roadside bomb targets a military vehicle in farmland in the Tarmiya district north of Baghdad, killing three Iraqi soldiers.  
There are no immediate claims of responsibility, but the area is reportedly a known hotspot for ISIS sleeper cells. Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#), [Middle East Eye](#)
  - **November 21, 2022:** Iran’s IRGC confirms it launched missiles and drones at three areas in Iraqi Kurdistan, inflicting “heavy damage” on Komala and the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, both of which Iran considers to be terrorist groups.  
The strikes kill at least 26 members of the two groups, according to Iranian media. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
  - **November 20, 2022:** Turkish warplanes target PKK and YPG bases in northern Iraq and Syria in response to a November 13 bombing in Istanbul that killed six.  
The airstrikes in Iraq target the towns of Qandil, Asos, and Hakurk. The Turkish military claims it destroyed 89 targets, including shelters, tunnels, and ammunition depots. Source: [Reuters](#)
  - **November 19, 2022:** Unidentified gunmen attack an Iraqi military post near Kirkuk, killing at least four soldiers.  
Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
  - **November 14, 2022:** IRGC drones and missiles target alleged terrorist bases near Irbil and Sulaimaniya.  
At least one person is killed and 10 wounded when rockets strike the headquarters of an Iranian Kurdish party in the Iraqi city of Koye. The IRGC claims it had targeted “terrorist groups.” Sources: [Tehran Times](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Associated Press](#)
  - **November 8, 2022:** Unidentified assailants shoot and kill a U.S. aid worker in his car in Baghdad’s Karrada district.  
According to initial police reports, the assailants were trying to kidnap the American. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
  - **October 20, 2022:** A car bomb in Iraqi Kurdistan’s city of Sulaimaniya wounds two.  
Source: [Reuters](#)
  - **October 13, 2022:** At least nine rockets land near Baghdad’s Green Zone, wounding several members of the Iraqi security forces, according to a military statement.  
The statement does not provide further specifics regarding the casualties. The attack comes as the Iraqi parliament is meeting to elect a new president. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Al Jazeera](#)
  - **October 12, 2022:** British newspaper *Asharq al-Awsat* reports confirmation the IRGC is preparing for ground operations in Iraqi Kurdistan. IRGC channels on Telegram reportedly claim the armed forces were preparing for a “ground attack on the headquarters of separatist terrorists.” Source: [Asharq al-Awsat](#)
  - **October 12, 2022:** At least eight Katyusha rockets are launched toward the Khor Mor gas field in Iraqi Kurdistan.  
There are no casualties or extensive damage reported and operations continue unabated. Security forces find a rocket launcher with a timer fixed on top of a mini-truck in a rural area about 15 miles southwest of Khor Mor. There are four unfired rockets inside the launcher, which has a capacity of 12 rockets. Kurdish officials blame Iran-backed militias. Source: [Reuters](#)
  - **October 8, 2022:** Four rockets are fired toward the Zilkan military in Nineveh province but fall in the Faziliye village without causing any casualties.  
Shiite group Ahrar al-Iraq claims responsibility, calling the attack a response to Turkey’s intervention in Iraqi affairs. Sources: [Basnews](#), [Kurdistan 24](#)
  - **October 7, 2022:** A sticky bomb attached to the car of a Kurdistan Region Security Council officer in Irbil kills the officer and wounds his wife, sister, and two children.  
The officer is later identified as Hawkar Abdullah Rasul. Two suspects are arrested later that day. Sources: [Defense Post](#), [Kurdistan 24](#), [Kurdistan 24](#)
  - **October 5, 2022 - October 6, 2022:** Following a violent confrontation on October 5 between gunmen from Saraya Salam and AAH, Sadr orders all armed factions in Iraq to freeze their activities.  
He also orders a ban on “the use of weapons in all provinces except for Salah al-Din, (Samarra and its surroundings) or as directed by the current commander-in-chief of the armed forces.” Sadr calls on Kadhimi to “rein in the insolent militias of Qais and their ilk, as they know only terrorism, money and power.” Source: [Arab Weekly](#)
  - **October 2, 2022:** The IRGC launches rocket and artillery strikes on bases used by the Komala Party in the Mount Halgurd area, near the Iranian border.  
The strikes destroy some outposts but do not cause any casualties, according to Komala. Sources: [Jerusalem Post](#), [Asharq al-Awsat](#)
  - **September 28, 2022:** IRGC missile and drone attacks kill at least 14 people and wound 58 near Irbil and Sulaimaniya in Iraqi Kurdistan.
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U.S. forces shoot down an unmanned IRGC drone that appears to be heading toward them in Irbil. No U.S. casualties are reported. U.S. Central Command condemns the IRGC's unprovoked attack on Irbil. An October Human Rights Watch report accuses the IRGC of killing civilians in its September 28 attack. Sources: [Reuters](#), [U.S. Central Command](#), [Asharq al-Awsat](#), [Arab News](#)

- **September 28, 2022:** Four Katyusha rockets land in Baghdad's Green Zone, wounding four security officers. According to an Iraqi military statement, one rocket landed near parliament, another near the parliament's guesthouse, and another near the Judicial Council. A four rocket also reportedly landed near parliament. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **September 24, 2022:** Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launch artillery fire on Iraq's northern Kurdistan region, targeting the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan and the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan in Iraq. According to media sources, the opposition groups had reportedly deployed armed forces and smuggled weapons into border towns to "stoke unrest" in Iran due to ongoing protests initiated by the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish woman who died in custody after being detained by Tehran's morality police, the Guardian Patrol, earlier in the month. The IRGC continues to launch missile and drone strikes in Iraqi Kurdistan throughout the week. An IRGC statement says strikes would continue until the enemy bases are dismantled and the threat is removed. Sources: [Bloomberg](#), [Iran Wire](#), [Press TV](#), [Tasnim News Agency](#)
- **September 5, 2022:** Four Katyusha rockets strike the Soran area of Irbil, causing material damage. No casualties are reported. Source: [Iraqi News](#)
- **September 5, 2022:** An unidentified drone strikes a PKK position in Irbil, killing at least two militants. Turkey does not immediately claim responsibility. Source: [Kurdistan 24](#)
- **September 5, 2022:** Suspected ISIS militants kidnap a shepherd in Diyala province's Narin village. Source: [Rudaw](#)
- **August 31, 2022 - September 1, 2022:** On August 31, members of Saraya Salam attack AAH offices in Basra. In retaliation, AAH attacks members of Saraya Salam, resulting in overnight clashes lasting several hours that leave at least two Saraya Salam members and two AAH members dead. Salah Mohammed al-Iraqi, a representative of Sadr, calls AAH "maddogs" in a Twitter post. Khazali calls on his followers to ignore the comments. He instructs AAH to close their offices until further notice. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **August 29, 2022 - August 30, 2022:** On August 29, influential Shiite Muslim cleric Moqtada al-Sadr announced his resignation from Iraqi politics, prompting his followers to storm a palatial government complex in Baghdad. Members of the Sadrist militia Saraya Salam ("Peace Brigade") violently clash with members of PMF and rival Shiite groups. The fighting continues August 30 as some of Sadr's followers reportedly fire machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades into Baghdad's Green Zone. At least 30 are reportedly killed and more than 400 wounded in two days of fighting. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Guardian](#), [Associated Press](#), [BBC News](#), [Associated Press](#)
- **August 28, 2022:** Gunmen in Sulaimani province's Kifri district kill Suhail Khurshid, a member of the PKK-affiliated Kurdistan Society Movement's leadership council. Source: [Kurdistan 24](#)
- **August 28, 2022:** ISIS militants attack a group of shepherds in Kirkuk's Laylan district, killing one and injuring another. At least one ISIS member is also killed. Source: [Rudaw](#)
- **August 26, 2022:** A roadside IED targeted a vehicle belonging to the Australian embassy in Iraq. The bombing occurred in the al-Qadisiyah neighborhood at the western entrance of Baghdad's Green Zone. No casualties and only minor damage are reported. Source: [Xinhua](#)
- **August 25, 2022:** At least nine rockets strike near Turkey's Zilkan military base in Nineveh province. No casualties or damage are reported. Source: [Rudaw](#)
- **August 15, 2022:** Four rockets strike the Turkish Zilkan military base in Nineveh province. No casualties or damage are reported. Liwa Ahrar al-Iraq claims responsibility. Sources: [Rudaw](#), [Mehr News](#)
- **August 2, 2022:** Suspected ISIS militants attack and temporarily occupy an Iraqi army outpost in Kashakawl village in Khanaqin's Qaratapa subdistrict. An Iraqi army convoy carrying reinforcement strikes an IED, killing five soldiers. Authorities suspect ISIS. Sources: [Kurdistan 24](#), [Rudaw](#)
- **July 29, 2022:** Three PKK fighters attempt to cross from Syrian Kurdistan to Iraqi Kurdistan close to a Peshmerga position near the Peshkhabur gate, resulting in clashes that leave one Peshmerga fighter wounded. Source: [Kurdistan 24](#)
- **July 24, 2022 - July 25, 2022:** Overnight ISIS attacks in four Iraqi provinces kill at least nine. In Baghdad's Tarmiyah, two civilians are killed while two members of the Saraya Salam militia are killed in Samarra. A member of the Iraqi federal police is shot dead in Kirkuk. An ISIS attack in Diyala kills four and wounds 11. Source: [Rudaw](#)
- **July 24, 2022:** Six ISIS gunmen ambush a family returning from a swim in Lake Hamrin in Diyala province, killing five and wounding three. ISIS claims responsibility after the attack. Source: [Rudaw](#)
- **July 22, 2022:** A Grad rocket strikes Turkey's Zilkan base in Nineveh province. At least 14 rockets are reportedly fired toward the base. Liwa Ahrar al-Iraq claims responsibility, calling the strike a response to the July 20 Turkish shelling of a resort near the Kurdistan city of Zakho that killed nine Iraqi tourists. Source: [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#)
- **July 21, 2022 - July 22, 2022:** ISIS claims responsibility for 13 attacks in Iraq, killing and wounding 30 people. Source: [Rudaw](#)
- **July 20, 2022:** A deadly strike targets a mountain resort in the Kurdish region of Dohuk Governorate, Iraq. The strike kills nine and wounds more than 20 others. According to Iraqi state media, Turkish forces were responsible for the shelling, but the Turkish government claims the PKK was behind the strike. Militants attack federal police in a remote area north of Baghdad. The attack kills six

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Iraqi police and wounds seven others. Sources: [United Nations](#), [Defense Post](#), [Asharq Al-Awsat](#), [Defense Post](#)

- **July 14, 2022 - July 20, 2022:** ISIS claims responsibility for three attacks that killed or wounded 13 people. Source: [Rudaw](#)
- **June 8, 2022:** An explosive laden drone targets the city of Irbil in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq. The blast injures three civilians. According to media reports, it is suspected that the target of the attack was a new U.S. consulate facility. The Kurdistan Region Security council reportedly blames KH for the strike. Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Al-Monitor](#)
- **May 30, 2022:** Militants from a pro-Iran group called “International Resistance” launch five rockets targeting an Iraqi military base hosting the U.S.-led global coalition against ISIS. The Ain al-Assad base in Anbar province is controlled by Iraq but hosts coalition troops. No casualties are reported. Source: [Defense Post](#)
- **May 28, 2022:** Two rockets are fired at Ardanay village in Bamarni, northern Iraq. The rockets kill two and injure two others. The Kurdistan Region’s Directorate General of Counter Terrorism (CTD) claims the PKK were responsible for the attack. Source: [Al-Monitor](#)
- **May 25, 2022:** PKK militants engage in fighting with Turkish soldiers in northern Iraq. The fighting kills five Turkish soldiers and wounds two others. Source: [Defense Post](#)
- **May 24, 2022:** ISIS gunmen ambush a farmland in Kirkuk, northern Iraq. The gunmen kill three teenagers and three policemen who were attempting to put out a crop fire. Source: [Defense Post](#)
- **May 6, 2022:** A New York federal court sentences Chasib Hafedh Saadoun Al Fawadi, an Iraqi citizen residing in Geddes, New York, to four years in prison for lying to U.S. immigration officials about his membership in a Middle Eastern paramilitary group. Al Fawadi reportedly denied being a member of any group engaged in violent activities. However, immigration services discovered that while Al Fawadi lived in Iraq, he was a member of AAH. Al Fawadi reportedly traveled to Syria in 2013 to engage in combat operations in support of the Syrian regime and later concealed his travel when he applied for refugee classification and permanent resident status in the United States. Source: [U.S. Department of Justice](#)
- **April 21, 2022:** A criminal court in Anbar, western Iraq, sentences four men to death by hanging on charges related to terrorism. The defendants—who were reportedly affiliated with ISIS—set off a car bomb in Ramadi in September 2020 that wounded six people. At a criminal court in Najaf, south of Baghdad, another four men are handed the death sentence for killing a policeman in January 2020. It is unreported if those in the Najaf case were affiliated with ISIS. Source: [Barron's](#)
- **April 4, 2022:** A judge in Phoenix, Arizona certifies the Iraqi government’s extradition request for Ali Yousif Ahmed Al-Nouri on charges that he participated in the killings of two police officers in Fallujah in June 2006 and October 2006. Al-Nouri was allegedly the leader of an al-Qaeda-affiliated group at the time. The extradition request has been sent to the U.S. Department of Justice and the decision to extradite Al-Nouri to Iraq will ultimately be up to Secretary of State Anthony Blinken’s office. Source: [ABC News](#)
- **March 13, 2022:** An Iranian barrage of 10 missiles strikes near the U.S. consulate in Irbil, Iraq. There are no U.S. casualties or damage to U.S. property. The IRGC claims it targeted a training center belonging to Israel’s Mossad spy agency. Iranian media reports the strikes are in response to “recent crimes of the fake Zionist regime,” referring to a March 7 Israeli airstrike in Damascus, Syria, that killed two IRGC officers. Iranian media also reports the missile strike in Iraq exacted a “heavy toll on Zionists.” U.S. and Iraqi officials condemn the Iranian attack, while KH praises it. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Tasnim News Agency](#), [Tehran Times](#), [Associated Press](#), [Washington Post](#), [Jerusalem Post](#)
- **February 2, 2022:** Rockets strike the Zilkan base in Nineveh. There are no reported casualties. The group Ahrar Sinjar claims responsibility. The group claims it fired 18 rockets toward the base in retaliation for Turkish airstrikes that killed and wounded multiple civilians in Iraqi Kurdistan’s Sinjar the day before. In response to the Turkish airstrikes, AAH’s Khazali says the Iraqi resistance “will teach the Turkish occupation tough lessons and force them out of the pure land of Iraq.” Sources: [Rudaw](#), [Rudaw](#)
- **January 28, 2022:** Three rockets strike runways at Baghdad International Airport. There are no reported casualties but there is damage to an Iraqi Airways plane. On August 7, 2022, Iraq’s Supreme Judicial Council sentenced four individuals to life in prison for the attack. The convicts’ identities and affiliations are not publicly released. Source: [Al Jazeera](#); [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **January 25, 2022:** Three rockets target the home of Iraqi parliament speaker Mohammed al-Halbusi in Anbar province’s Karma district, wounding two children. The attack comes hours after the supreme court confirms Halbusi’s reelection as speaker. A video circulates of masked militants claiming to belong to a group called Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama’ah threatening Halbusi for promoting normalization with Israel. Some Iraqi observers point to unusual dialects in the video and suggest it is merely an attempt to shift blame for the rocket attack onto Sunni Islamist factions. Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#), [Agence France-Presse](#), [Al-Monitor](#)
- **January 21, 2022:** ISIS militants break into army barracks in al-Azim district outside the city of Baqouba in Diyala province. The militants kill a guard and then shoot dead 11 soldiers in their sleep before escaping. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Associated Press](#)
- **January 16, 2022:** Twin explosions target two Baghdad banks associated with Kurdish politicians, wounding two. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **January 16, 2022:** Three rockets strike a Turkish base in Zlikan, northeast of Mosul. There are no reported casualties. Source: [ANI](#)
- **January 15, 2022:** Two Katyusha rockets target a Turkish base in Zlikan, northeast of Mosul. There are no reported casualties. Source: [ANI](#)

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- **January 14, 2022:** A hand grenade strikes the Baghdad headquarters of Iraqi parliament speaker Mohammed Halbousi's Taqaddum party, wounding two and damaging the buildings doors and windows. Hours later, another hand grenade strikes the Baghdad headquarters of the Azm party. There are no casualties reported in the second attack. Source: [Associated Press](#)
  - **January 13, 2022:** Four rockets target the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad's Green Zone. Three of the rockets strike within the embassy's perimeter. The fourth strikes a school in a nearby residential complex, wounding two people, including a child. The Iraqi military says the rockets were launched from Baghdad's Dora neighborhood. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
  - **January 7, 2022:** Rockets target Peshmerga forces around Kirkuk province. No casualties are reported. Source: [Rudaw](#)
  - **January 5, 2022:** Five Katyusha rockets strike the Ain al-Asad base while three rockets land in its perimeter. There are no reported casualties. The previously unknown group Qassem al-Jabarayn claims responsibility and pledges to continue attacking until all U.S. forces withdraw from Iraq. Source: [Associated Press](#)
  - **January 4, 2022:** Iraqi air defenses shoot down two explosives-laden drones heading toward the Ain al-Asad airbase. Source: [Reuters](#)
  - **January 3, 2022:** Iraqi air defenses shoot down two armed drones approaching a military base hosting U.S. forces near Baghdad's airport. Source: [Reuters](#)
  - **December 19, 2021:** Two rockets strike Baghdad's Green Zone, causing damage but no casualties. One rocket is destroyed by the U.S. Embassy's defense system. A second rocket falls near a national monument, damaging two civilian vehicles. Source: [Associated Press](#)
  - **December 7, 2021:** A motorcycle bomb in Basra kills at least four and wounds 20. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [Arab News](#), [Reuters](#)
  - **December 6, 2021:** Alleged ISIS militants from Syria attack Kurdish Peshmerga forces in Ninevah province's Makhmour district. Source: [Al-Monitor](#)
  - **December 5, 2021:** ISIS militants attack the Qara Salem village in northern Iraq, killing four Peshmerga soldiers and a civilian and wounding four others. Separately, ISIS fighters attack and capture Luhaiban village. Iraqi and Peshmerga forces recapture the village the following day. Source: [Reuters](#)
  - **December 2, 2021:** ISIS militants attack multiple homes in Khidir Jija in the Makhmour region, killing 10 Peshmerga soldiers and three civilians. Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [Al Jazeera](#)
  - **November 27, 2021:** A Peshmerga convoy hits a roadside bomb in Diyala province. ISIS snipers attack Peshmerga forces attending to the wounded, killing five. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
  - **November 7, 2021:** Two explosives-laden drones target the Baghdad home of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, lightly wounding Kadhimi and wounding seven members of his security detail. The Iraqi military shoots down one of the drones. Shortly after the attack, Kadhimi posts to Twitter calling for calm and calling the attack cowardly. The United States, Arab League, and Palestine Liberation Organization condemn the assassination attempt. Anonymous Iraqi security officials tell Reuters the drones were made by Iran. The officials say Iran-backed militias were responsible and specifically accuse KH and AAH of carrying out the attack together. A militia source tells Reuters KH was involved, though KH separately denies responsibility. KH spokesman Abu Ali al-Askari accuses Kadhimi of "playing the victim" and says there are "less expensive" ways to target him if that is what the group had wanted. IRGC-Quds Force commander Ismail Ghaani visits Baghdad on November 8 and denies Tehran had any connection to the attack. Sources: [CNN](#), [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#)
  - **October 26, 2021:** ISIS gunmen attack the Shiite village of al-Rashad in Diyala province, killing at least 11 and wounding 15. The militants reportedly kidnapped two villagers and then attacked the village when their ransom demands were not met. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#)
  - **October 3, 2021:** Iraqi security forces open fire on a suicide bomber in an explosives-filled car in Ramadi, capital of Anbar province. The bomber detonates his explosives, killing himself and wounding five others. ISIS is suspected. Later in the day, ISIS militants attack the Diyala village, north of Bagdad, killing at least two soldiers and wounding two others. The Iraqi air force bombs an ISIS hideout in response. Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Xinhua](#), [Twitter](#)
  - **September 28, 2021:** ISIS agents attempt to smuggle 500 kilograms of TNT into Iraq from Syria via car. Iraqi security forces stop the car at the border and seize the explosives. Source: [National](#)
  - **September 11, 2021:** Explosive-laden drones attack Irbil International Airport. No casualties are reported. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
  - **September 11, 2021:** Suspected ISIS militants attack a unit of Iraqi federal police officers in Kirkuk province's Daquq district, killing at least three and wounding several others. A roadside bomb targets Iraqi reinforcements. Source: [Kurdistan 24](#)
  - **September 5, 2021:** Suspected ISIS militants attack police officers in Satiha village in the al-Rashad region of Kirkuk, killing three. Police reinforcements arrive but additional officers are ambushed by roadside explosives. At least 13 officers are killed and five are wounded in the attack. Another officer is reported missing. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [Daily Sabah](#)
  - **September 5, 2021:** Gunmen attack an army checkpoint southeast of Mosul, killing at least three soldiers and wounding one. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
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- **September 2, 2021:** An ISIS cell of 30 militants attacks the Shahali Kon village in the Sargaran sub-district of Kirkuk province, killing at least one Iraqi soldier and wounding six civilians.  
The militants kidnap one civilian before Iraqi forces repel the attackers. Source: [Kurdistan 24](#)
- **August 21, 2021:** ISIS militants ambush members of the Noujaba Movement—a pro-Iranian militia—at their base in Tarmiya, near Baghdad. The ambush kills three. Source: [Arab Weekly](#)
- **August 12, 2021:** PKK militants launch a mortar toward a Turkish military base in northern Iraq, wounding a Turkish soldier who later dies of his injuries.  
Turkish forces retaliate and kill three PKK fighters. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **August 3, 2021:** ISIS militants attack Safra village in Kirkuk province’s Rashad district, killing Iraqi federal police officers. One militant is killed and another is wounded during the attack. Source: [Kurdistan 24](#)
- **July 30, 2021:** Gunmen attack a funeral in Salahuddin province, killing at least eight. Officials do not specify the number of casualties. A local security official accuses ISIS of responsibility. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **July 23, 2021:** An armed drone attacks the Bashur military base near al-Harir in Iraqi Kurdistan but causes no damage or injuries. The Iran-backed Thareen Brigade claims responsibility. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [Military Times](#)
- **July 21, 2021:** Unidentified gunmen attack the headquarters of the 66th Army Brigade in the Mutaibija area in Salahuddin province, killing two Iraqi soldiers and wounding three others. Iraqi officials blame ISIS.  
Source: [Asharq al-Awsat](#)
- **July 19, 2021:** A suicide bomber detonates in the Al-Wuhailat market in Baghdad’s al-Sadr City, killing at least 35 and wounding more than 60. The attack occurs on the eve of the Islamic festival of Eid al-Adha. ISIS claims responsibility through its Nasheer news agency on Telegram. On July 24, Kadhim claims Iraqi forces arrested the “terror cell” responsible for the bombing. Sources: [Reuters](#), [United Nations](#), [Al Jazeera](#)
- **July 8, 2021:** Two rockets are launched toward the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. The embassy’s anti-rocket system reportedly diverts one of the rockets, while the other falls near the perimeter of Baghdad’s Green Zone.  
Source: [Reuters](#)
- **July 7, 2021:** At least 14 rockets strike the Ain al-Asad airbase, wounding two. Unlaunched rockets explode in a nearby Iraqi neighborhood, causing damage to homes and businesses. The Iraqi military stops a truck in Abar’s Al-Baghdadi area and discover a rocket launcher base hidden among bags of flour. A militia called Liwa Tha’ar al-Muhandis claims responsibility. Source: [Military Times](#)
- **July 6, 2021:** Just after midnight, U.S. forces shoot down an armed drone targeting the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. There are no casualties. U.S. military officials say Iraqi militias launched the drone. Sources: [Defense Post](#), [Associated Press](#)
- **July 5, 2021:** At least three rockets strike the Ain al-Asad airbase in Anbar province. No casualties are reported. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **June 30, 2021:** An explosion at a market in Baghdad’s al-Sadr City wounds at least 11.  
Source: [Reuters](#)
- **June 27, 2021:** Katyusha rockets strike the Salah al-Din Power Station in the city of Samarra, causing severe damage. ISIS claims responsibility.  
Source: [Reuters](#)
- **June 21, 2021 - June 22, 2021:** On June 21, ISIS fighters attack a village in Diyala province, killing a tribal leader and his wife and demolishing their house.  
On June 22, ISIS releases an audio message of spokesman Abu Hamza al-Qurashi threatening Iraqi Sunni militia fighters. Qurashi says ISIS is delaying targeting Sunni fighters in their homes and giving them the opportunity to repent. Source: [National](#)
- **June 7, 2021:** Unidentified gunmen kill Colonel Nebras Shaban, assistant director of the Iraqi Intelligence Service’s Monitoring Department, near his home in the Al Baladiyat area, east of Baghdad.  
Source: [National](#)
- **June 3, 2021:** A gas cylinder explodes at a restaurant in Baghdad, killing at least three and wounding 16.  
Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **May 26, 2021:** Iraqi forces arrest PMF commander Qasim Muslih, accused of involvement in the May 9 killing of two young Iraqi activists by gunmen in the Shiite holy city of Karbala.  
Muslih is head of the PMF in Anbar province but is not linked to a specific Iran-backed militia. KH condemns his arrest as a kidnapping. Armed militia members block roads outside of Baghdad’s Green Zone and surround government buildings. The fighters stand down after Muslih is handed over to the PMF. On June 9, the PMF release Muslih after a judge finds there is insufficient evidence against him. Sources: [New York Times](#), [Al Jazeera](#)
- **May 24, 2021:** Militants launch three rockets toward Ain al-Asad airbase.  
At least one lands inside the base. There are no reported casualties. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Middle East Eye](#)
- **May 11, 2021:** ISIS fighters attack Iraqi security forces near Mosul. British fighter jets strike the attacking ISIS fighters, killing several militants. Source: [Sky News](#)
- **May 11, 2021:** An armed drone strikes an airfield in Harir used by the Iraqi military’s Joint Special Operations Command. There are no injuries or damage reported. Source: [New York Times](#)
- **May 9, 2021:** ISIS fighters attack security checkpoints in Salahuddin province, killing two PMF members and wounding two others.  
Source: [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **May 8, 2021:** An armed drone targets the Ain al-Asad airbase, damaging a hangar. No casualties are reported.

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Source: [Times of Israel](#)

- **May 8, 2021:** A bomb in the Tuz Khurmatu district of Salahuddin province kills an Iraqi security officer  
Source: [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **May 6, 2021:** Two rockets target the Ain al-Asad airbase but fall in an unoccupied area.  
The attack does not result in damage or casualties. The attack comes during a visit to the country by a U.S. government delegation. Source: [Times of Israel](#)
- **May 5, 2021:** Unidentified militants attack two oilwells at the Bai Hassan oilfield in Kirkuk, killing at least one police officer and wounding three others at a nearby police post.  
The attack on the police post is allegedly to distract the police while other militants plant bombs at the oilfield. The attack does not disrupt production. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **May 4, 2021:** Two rockets are fired toward the Ain al-Assad airbase in Anbar province, but do not cause any damage or casualties.  
Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **May 3, 2021:** Six rockets are fired toward the al-Balad airbase, wounding a U.S. contractor.  
Sources: [Jerusalem Post](#), [Al Jazeera](#)
- **May 2, 2021:** Two rockets are fired toward Baghdad Airport.  
There are no casualties or damages reported. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [Al Jazeera](#)
- **April 30, 2021 - May 1, 2021:** Suspected ISIS fighters attack Iraqi troops in Tarmiya overnight, killing four.  
Another five are killed after Iraqi reinforcements arrive, including a civilian. In the Alton Kubre region, suspected ISIS fighters attack a military position, killing six Peshmerga fighters. Separately, a bomb targeting an army convoy on its way to Akashat kills two. A bomb in Diyala province kills one and wounds two. Sources: [Middle East Eye](#), [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **April 29, 2021:** Security forces shoot and kill a would-be suicide bomber at the National Security building in the Qurayyah area of Kirkuk.  
The bullets detonate the explosives belt, which wounds two security officers. Source: [National](#)
- **April 22, 2021:** Eight rockets are fired toward Baghdad's airport.  
Three rockets land near the airport but there are no reports of casualties. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **April 18, 2021:** At least five rockets strike the Al-Balad airbase, wounding three Iraqi soldiers and two foreign contractors.  
A bomb targets a car belonging to a Peshmerga member in the Koji Hajri area of Irbil, killing him. Kurdish security suspect the PKK of responsibility. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [Agence France-Presse](#), [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **April 17, 2021:** Militants uses explosives to attack two oil wells at the Bai Hassan oilfield near Kirkuk.  
There is no significant damage reported. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **April 15, 2021:** A bomb placed under a vehicle in al-Sadr city in Baghdad kills four and wounds 17.  
ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#)
- **April 15, 2021:** An explosives-laden drone strikes Irbil International Airport in Iraqi Kurdistan.  
The drone targets a military section of the airport used by U.S. forces. Three rockets are fired at a Turkish military base in Bashiqa in Nineveh province, killing a Turkish soldier and wounding two civilians in a nearby village. Iraqi forces find the launching pads for the attack in an area of in PMF-controlled territory. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [Agence France-Presse](#), [Anadolu Agency](#), [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **April 4, 2021:** Two rockets land in a sparsely populated area near the Al-Balad airbase.  
No damage or casualties are reported. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **March 30, 2021:** A roadside bomb hits a coalition convoy in the city of Nasiriyah in the Dhi Qar province.  
There are no reported casualties. Source: [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **March 23, 2021:** Three unidentified militants set off a bomb attached to a motorcycle in the Meshtel region of Baghdad, killing at least one and wounding three.  
Source: [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **March 20, 2021:** A bomb explodes as a police convoy passes by in Saladin province, killing two security personnel and a civilian.  
Authorities suspect ISIS of responsibility. Source: [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **March 19, 2021:** Unidentified gunmen open fire on the office of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Halabja in the Sulaymaniyah province in Iraqi Kurdistan.  
There are no reported casualties. Source: [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **March 18, 2021:** A roadside bomb explodes on a highway in Diwanayah, targeting a convoy carrying logistical equipment for the U.S.-led coalition.  
There are no reported casualties or significant damage. Source: [Middle East Monitor](#)
- **March 17, 2021:** A bomb disables the Mirsad-Diyala electrical supply line between Iran and Iraq.  
Source: [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **March 15, 2021:** Seven rockets are fired toward the Al-Balad airbase, which houses U.S. troops.  
Two rockets hit near the base, while the other five rockets crash in a nearby village. There are no reported casualties or damage. Authorities trace the rockets to a village in the neighboring province of Diyala. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **March 12, 2021:** Militants wearing military uniforms raid multiple houses in al-Boudur in Iraq's Salahuddin province, killing eight people, including six members of a single family.  
ISIS claims responsibility the following day and alleges the targeted family had been part of a PMF spy ring. Iraqi authorities confirm ISIS's responsibility. Sources: [Kurdistan 24](#), [CNN](#)
- **March 9, 2021:** A hand grenade explodes in a garbage dump near Al-Aimmah bridge in Baghdad, killing one and wounding eight.



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The attack reportedly targets a group of Shiite visitors in the area memorializing eighth-century Shiite imam Musa al-Kadhim. The attack came hours after an Iraqi Interior Ministry statement that authorities had stopped a potential suicide attack targeting Shiites. Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Anadolu Agency](#)

- **March 3, 2021:** At least 10 rockets strike the Ain al-Asad airbase in Anbar province, killing a U.S. contractor. The base houses U.S. and other coalition forces. Iraqi security forces soon after find a truck from which the rockets were launched. It is the first rocket attack since a series of U.S. airstrikes on February 26 against Iran-linked targets in Syria near the Iraqi border. Those airstrikes killed at least 22 members of KH and the PMF. On March 7, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin warns the United States would respond to the rocket attack at a time and place of its choosing. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#)
- **February 22, 2021:** At least two rockets strike Baghdad's Green Zone, which houses the U.S. Embassy. There are no reported casualties or damage. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#)
- **February 20, 2021:** At least four rockets hit the Balad airbase in Salah al-Din province, wounding one. U.S. defense company Sallyport services military aircraft from the base, which was previously attacked by Katyusha rockets in January 2020. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [Associated Press](#)
- **February 15, 2021:** Militants launch approximately 14 rockets toward an airbase used by the U.S. military in Irbil. Three of the rockets strike the base, killing a civilian contractor and wounding 11 others in and outside of the base. U.S. and Iraqi authorities launch an investigation into how militants were able to move within range of the base in Iraqi Kurdistan. An Iraqi Shiite militia calling itself the Guardians of the Blood Brigade claims responsibility. Some regional observers reportedly believe the group is a front for one of Iraq's larger Shiite militias. Iran denies involvement in the attack. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#), [U.S. Department of State](#)
- **February 4, 2021:** ISIS militants attack Iraqi army forces in the town of Jalawla in Diyala province, killing two Iraqi soldiers and wounding two others. Source: [Kurdistan 24](#)
- **January 23, 2021:** Militants ambush a PMF battalion east of Tikrit in the Salahuddin province, killing 11 and wounding 10. Iraqi authorities suspect ISIS. Source: [Asharq al-Awsat](#)
- **January 21, 2021:** A suicide bomber claims to be ill in a crowded marketplace in Baghdad and sets off his explosives when a crowd gathers around him. A second bomber reportedly claims to be an injured victim of the first blast and detonates his explosives when a crowd gathers around him. The two bombings kill at least 32 and wound 110 others. It is the first suicide bombing in Baghdad's commercial area in three years. ISIS claims responsibility. On February 2, an airstrike in southern Iraq by the U.S.-led coalition kills two ISIS commanders allegedly involved in the planning of the suicide attacks. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [Al-Monitor](#)
- **January 18, 2021:** Explosions are reported at power transmission towers in Jurf al-Sakhar south of Baghdad. There are no reported casualties. According to some reports, the towers belong to Kata'ib Hezbollah. Pro-Iran media blame the explosions on a U.S. airstrike, but Iraqi officials declare ISIS is responsible. Sources: [Jerusalem Post](#), [National](#)
- **January 15, 2021:** ISIS fighters attack two security positions in Jalawla in Iraqi Kurdistan, killing one and wounding three others. Source: [Kurdistan 24](#)
- **December 22, 2020:** A bomb detonates outside of a liquor store in Baghdad. A street sweeper is killed in the explosion. No group claims responsibility for the attack, however, on December 15, a group called People of the Good issued a statement advising Iraqi security forces to stay away from liquor shops as they seek to clear Baghdad of "their filth." According to media sources, People of the Good is believed to be affiliated with KH. Sources: [Middle East Monitor](#), [Al-Monitor](#)
- **December 20, 2020:** An unidentified "outlawed group" launches 20 rockets targeting the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad's Green Zone. According to media reports, some of the rockets were intercepted, however, the particular rockets launched have been more accurate and larger than in past attacks. Buildings and cars were damaged, and at least one civilian casualty was reported. Several groups, including KH, condemned the attack, stating "bombing the (U.S.) embassy of evil at this time is considered out of order." The attack occurred two weeks ahead of the one-year anniversary of the airstrike that killed Soleimani. Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Jerusalem Post](#), [NPR](#), [ABC News](#)
- **November 29, 2020:** Two Katyusha rockets strike the Siniya oil refinery in Salahuddin province, causing a small fire but no casualties. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [Reuters](#)
- **November 27, 2020:** Dozens of men linked to the Rab' Allah (RA) Shiite militia raid a massage parlor in Baghdad. The assailants attack employees, before dragging them out and setting the parlor on fire. The RA released a video message claiming the parlor was targeted as it was "seeking to corrupt the young it a dirty goal set by the United States and Israel." According to Iraqi intelligence sources, the RA is reportedly linked to KH. Source: [Voice of America](#)
- **November 22, 2020:** A car strikes a roadside bomb in Salahuddin province. Militants ambush and open fire on soldiers who arrive at the scene after the explosion. At least six soldiers and four civilians are killed in the attack. There are no immediate claims of responsibility, but Iraqi authorities suspect ISIS. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **November 17, 2020:** Rocket attacks resume on Baghdad's Green Zone after a lull of several weeks as seven rockets are fired toward the U.S. Embassy. At least three of the rockets are intercepted but others fall in civilian areas, killing a child. Newly formed KH subgroup Ashab al-Kahf, "the Cave Companions," initially claims responsibility on social media. However, after news of the child's death becomes public, KH and the Fatah Coalition issue a statement denying any responsibility or connection between the rocket attack and Shiite militias. KH labels the attack an attempt to deflect attention from Trump's loss in the U.S. presidential election earlier that month. Source: [Voice of America](#)
- **November 9, 2020:** Militants throw grenades at and open fire on Al-Radwanayah lookout point west of Baghdad, killing 11 and wounding eight.

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The lookout is overseen by state-sponsored tribal forces. There are no immediate claims of responsibility, but Iraqi authorities blame ISIS.  
Sources: [Voice of America](#), [Al Jazeera](#)

- **October 11, 2020:** A convoy delivering equipment to the U.S.-led military hits a roadside bomb, resulting in some damage but no casualties.  
Source: [Reuters](#)
- **September 30, 2020:** A series of rockets strike a military base near Erbil Airport in Iraqi Kurdistan used by the U.S.-led coalition. At least six missiles are intercepted and there is no damage reported. Kurdish officials blame Shiite militias, which deny responsibility. The attack comes a day after Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi tells more than two dozen foreign diplomats his government would protect their facilities from attack. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Voice of America](#)
- **September 28, 2020:** Two Katyusha rockets strike a house near Baghdad's airport, killing two women and three children and wounding two other children. The home is destroyed. Launched from within Baghdad, the rockets targeted U.S. troops stationed at the airport but fell short. Iraqi intelligence sources blame a small group of Iran-backed fighters for the rocket fire. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [New York Times](#)
- **September 16, 2020:** An IED explodes outside the American Institute for English Learning in Najaf.  
Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **September 15, 2020:** A roadside bomb explodes near a British diplomatic convoy in Baghdad. The attack is the third in 24 hours targeting foreign missions. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Associated Press](#)
- **September 14, 2020:** A convoy carrying military equipment hits a roadside bomb in Babylon province. Later that day, two rockets are fired at Baghdad's Green Zone. There are no reported casualties for either attack. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- A mortar strikes a funeral procession in the formerly ISIS-held town of Bashir, killing one.  
Source: [Kurdistan 24](#)
- **September 2, 2020 - September 3, 2020:** An overnight attack on a border guards' headquarters in the Makr al-Naam region of Iraq's Anbar province near the Iraq-Saudi Arabia border kills two policemen and wounds three soldiers. Iraqi officials blame ISIS. Separately, Katyusha rocket reportedly targets a security company headquarters in Baghdad. In another incident, a bomb explodes on a highway in Babil province, damaging one vehicle. No casualties are reported. Source: [Kurdistan 24](#)
- **August 19, 2020:** Unidentified gunmen on a motorcycle shoot and kill human rights activist Reham Yacoub outside a gym in Basra. It is the third attack within a week targeting human rights advocates. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **August 14, 2020:** Human rights activist Tahseen Osama is killed inside the headquarters of a local Internet company in Basra as a growing protest movement demands basic services in the province. Gunmen wound two other activists in the city. Sources: [Washington Post](#), [Al Jazeera](#)
- **August 4, 2020 - August 18, 2020:** Fourteen bomb and rocket attacks target Iraqi logistics convoys for the U.S. military, the U.S. Embassy, and bases housing U.S. soldiers, including in the vicinity of Baghdad's airport. There are no claims of responsibility, but authorities suspect Iran-backed militias. Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#), [Reuters](#)
- **July 27, 2020:** Three Katyusha rockets strike the Camp Taji military base, damaging an Iraqi army helicopter but causing no casualties.  
Source: [Al-Monitor](#)
- **July 24, 2020:** Four Katyusha rockets strike the Besmaya military base hosting U.S. troops. There are no reported casualties. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. The following day, U.S. forces proceed with plans to fully turn the base over to Iraqi control. Source: [Al-Monitor](#)
- **July 6, 2020:** Two gunmen on motorcycles shoot and kill leading Iraqi researcher and ISIS expert Hisham al-Hashimi outside his home in Baghdad. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. ISIS and Iran-sponsored Shiite militias had previously threatened Hashimi. Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi promises to pursue those responsible. Sources: [Washington Post](#), [BBC News](#)
- **June 23, 2020:** A liquor store explodes in Baghdad near the French embassy. KH releases a statement over social media blessing the explosion and sabotage of stores that sell alcohol. Source: [Jerusalem Post](#)
- **June 15, 2020 - June 16, 2020:** Three rockets land near Baghdad's airport overnight. No damage or casualties are reported. Security forces trace the rockets to their point of origin on the outskirts of Baghdad and discover more rockets set up on wood platforms. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Source: [Defense Post](#)
- **June 1, 2020:** An IED explodes underneath an Iraqi military vehicle in the town of Makhmour, killing two soldiers and wounding two others.  
Source: [Kurdistan 24](#)
- **May 31, 2020:** In two separate incidents, unidentified militants kill two members of the Iraqi federal police and the PMF and wound six others. ISIS is suspected. Iraqi security forces in Basra arrest members of an ISIS sleeper cell allegedly planning attacks around the country. Source: [Kurdistan 24](#)
- **May 23, 2020:** ISIS fighters attack a police checkpoint on the outskirts of Zammar district in Nineveh province, killing three officers. Observers suspect the attack is revenge for the arrest of ISIS commander Abdul Nasser Qardash earlier in the month. Source: [Arab Weekly](#)
- **May 6, 2020:** Three Katyusha rockets land near the military sector of Baghdad airport. There are no reported casualties. Security forces discover the source of the rockets in the al-Barkiya area, west of Baghdad. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. It is the first rocket attack since March 26. The attack comes hours before a parliamentary vote to approve Mustafa al-Kadhimi as Iraq's new prime minister. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **May 4, 2020:** Gunmen attack an Iraqi army checkpoint between Kirkuk and Salahuddin, killing two soldiers. Separately, militants kill four members of the PMF in the village of al-Asiriya. ISIS is held responsible for the attacks. Source: [BBC News](#)
- **May 3, 2020:** ISIS militants clash with PMF fighters in the village of Umm al-Karami, in Diyala province, killing five.

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A soldier is shot dead by a sniper in the Ain Laila area. Source: [BBC News](#)

- **May 2, 2020:** Militants attack a police station in the village of Zaghaniya, in Diyala province, killing at least four. ISIS is held responsible for both attacks. A bomb in al-Uzaim kills one. Sources: [Kurdistan 24](#), [Middle East Eye](#), [BBC News](#)
- **May 1, 2020:** Militants attack PMF fighters preparing a predawn meal late at night on May 1 in the village of Mekeeshfa, south of Tikrit. Six PMF fighters are killed in the fighting, while another three PMF fighters are killed and four are wounded by a roadside bomb as reinforcements arrive. Another PMF fighter is shot dead in the nearby Tal al-Dahab village. The military says the attacks were coordinated. ISIS is suspected of responsibility. Sources: [Middle East Eye](#), [Associated Press](#), [Associated Press](#)
- **April 28, 2020:** Two militants drive to the gate of the Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism Directorate in Kirkuk. A militant wearing an explosive vest gets out of the car and throws a grenade at the building. He then detonates an explosive vest. At least three security personnel are wounded. The second militant drives away. There are no immediate claims of responsibility, but security forces suspect ISIS. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **April 23, 2020 - May 23, 2020:** ISIS claims responsibility for at least 260 attacks in Iraq during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, killing or wounding 426 people. Attacks include gun assaults, raids, ambushes of security forces, roadside bombs, and the murder of informers. Source: [Times](#)
- **April 21, 2020:** A roadside IED blows up under an army vehicle in the vicinity of the Um Hanta village in Diyala province, killing two soldiers. A sniper kills a police officer near a public university campus in Baqubah. A roadside bomb on the road connecting Quneitra and al-Lazakah villages in Nineveh province kills at least two. ISIS is suspected in all three attacks. Sources: [Kurdistan 24](#), [Kurdistan 24](#)
- **April 18, 2020:** Two rockets strike a Chinese oil facility south of Baghdad, causing minor damage. There are no reported casualties. A military official tells the Associated Press the rockets were launched by a militant group upset over a failed business proposition. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **April 6, 2020 - April 7, 2020:** On April 6, gunmen launch an overnight attack on a federal police checkpoint in the village of Daquq. Three roadside IEDs explode as reinforcements arrive, wounding three. On April 7, militants attack Peshmerga forces in the town of Kujalo, killing two. Separately, a roadside bomb blows up an Iraqi federal police convoy in the Daquq district of the Kirkuk province, wounding two. ISIS is suspected in all three attacks. Source: [Kurdistan 24](#)
- **April 6, 2020:** At least three rockets strike the site of American oil field service company Halliburton in the Burjesia area of Basra. There is no damage reported. Security officials find a rocket launcher with 11 unused missiles on a nearby road. The missiles defused. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. It is the first rocket attack since June 2019 to target a U.S. oil company. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Associated Press](#)
- **April 3, 2020:** An IED attack targeted a patrol of a commando regiment of the Diyala Operations Command in the outskirts of Maadan village. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **April 1, 2020:** A federal police officer is killed, and a battalion commander and brigadier general wounded in a security operation in the Makhoul mountain range in Diyala. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- On March 11, suspected Iranian-backed militias in Iraq launch rocket attacks from the Rashediya area of northeast Baghdad. The missiles target a military base at Camp Taji, 17 miles north of Baghdad. The attack kills three—two Americans and one British soldier—and injures at least 14 others. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the airstrikes are allegedly in retaliation for airstrikes previously carried out across the Iraqi border around the Syrian city of Abu Kamal. The next day on March 12 and into the morning of March 13, the United States launches airstrikes in the Baghdad region, hitting five locations targeting KH's weapons facilities. The strikes allegedly kill the IRGC's General Siamand Mashhadani, and four other IRGC members. According to Iraqi military officials, the airstrikes kill three Iraqi soldiers, two police officers, and a civilian worker. On March 14, 33 Katyusha rockets are launched by suspected terrorists targeting Camp Taji. The targeted section of Taji base houses U.S.-led coalition troops. The attack wounds three American and two Iraqi troops. The Iraqi military later finds seven rocket launchers and 24 unused rockets that were ready to launch in nearby Abu Izam. No group immediately claims responsibility for the attack and statements have yet to be released by Iraqi or American forces further detailing suspected perpetrators. The Pentagon reportedly orders U.S. military commanders in Iraq to draw up plans to destroy KH. Sources: [Washington Post](#), [New York Times](#), [BBC News](#), [Associated Press](#), [New York Times](#), [Jerusalem Post](#), [U.S. Department of Defense](#), [CNN](#), [Reuters](#), [Military.com](#), [New York Times](#)
- **March 10, 2020:** ISIS militants launch an attack in Khanaqin, Diyala province, where the Iraqi Army soldiers and the Popular Mobilization Forces are stationed. The attack kills two members of the Iraqi Army and one Shia Hashd al-Shaabi militia member. Source: [Kurdistan 24](#)
- **March 8, 2020:** ISIS militants open fire on security forces belonging to Iraq's counter-terrorism forces and U.S.-led coalition forces in Makhmour, northern Iraq. The joint operation was a mission to eliminate a stronghold for the militant group in north-central Iraq. The attack kills two U.S. service members, U.S. Marine Corps Captain Moises A. Navas and Gunnery Sergeant Diego D. Pongo. Sources: [ABC News](#), [Rudaw](#)
- **February 29, 2020:** Security forces in Kirkuk conduct a search for unspecified terrorists who previously ambushed a security checkpoint north of Daquq district. The operation results in an exchange of gunfire, killing one Iraqi soldier, and injuring one other. It is suspected that ISIS members were involved in the attack. Source: [Rudaw](#)
- **February 19, 2020:** Two gunmen break into the Kurdish village of Chakhmakha. They attack a youth recreation hub, killing four and wounding two others. It is uncertain if the assailants are members of ISIS, enemies of the Kurds, or the Baathists. However, ISIS regularly carries out attacks in territories close by. Source: [Rudaw](#)

## *Iraq: Extremism and Terrorism*

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- **February 13, 2020:** A missile lands inside the K-1 base, which hosts U.S. troops, near Kirkuk. No casualties or injuries are reported. It is suspected that KH is behind the attack. Also that day, ISIS members attack a village of the Kurdish religious minority known as the Kakais in Khanaqin district. The attack kills two and wounds 10 others. Sources: [Epoch Times](#), [Kurdistan 24](#)
  - **February 8, 2020:** ISIS militants ambush an army post in Salahuddin. The attack kills one soldier and wounds one other. According to [Kurdistan 24](#), ISIS sleeper cells have intensified attacks to an almost daily basis in rural areas north of Baghdad and south of the Kurdistan region. Source: [Kurdistan 24](#)
  - On January 3, a U.S. drone strike kills Qasem Soleimani, the head of Iran's Quds Force, alongside the head of KH near Baghdad International Airport. The strike prompts calls for revenge by the Iranian leadership and Iraqi militias. The Iraqi parliament on January 5 calls on the government to expel U.S. troops from the country. On January 4, one rocket lands in the Green Zone but causes no injuries or damage. Other rockets land near the Balad Air Base, which U.S. and Iraqi forces jointly use. There are no immediate claims of responsibility but KH promises more retaliation. On January 5, KH warns Iraqi civilians to stay at least one kilometer away from U.S. bases and facilities housing U.S. troops. Later that evening, at least six Katyusha rockets strike inside Baghdad, wounding at least six people. Two of the rockets land near the U.S. Embassy but cause no casualties. A third rocket strikes a residence outside of the Green Zone, wounding four. Three other rockets fall in Baghdad's Jadriya area. Separately on January 5, ISIS militants kill two Iraqi soldiers in Kirkuk. Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Fox News](#), [Military Times](#)
  - **December 27, 2019 - December 31, 2019:** On December 27, 2019, more than 30 missiles are fired at an Iraqi military base in Kirkuk, killing a U.S. contractor and wounding U.S. troops. In response, a December 29 U.S. airstrike targets five KH facilities in Iraq and Syria, killing 24 members of the terror group. On December 31, thousands of protesters, including KH members, assemble outside the U.S. Embassy compound in Baghdad demanding a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, waving the KH flag, throwing rocks, and chanting "Death to America!" A group of protesters breach the walls of the compound but are repelled before they can enter the embassy itself. U.S. President Donald Trump blames Iran for the embassy breach and demands Iraqi forces protect U.S. lives and property. Sources: [New York Times](#), [Guardian](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [Wall Street Journal](#)
  - **December 9, 2019:** U.S. government officials release statements claiming Iran is behind a series of increasingly sophisticated rocket attacks on joint U.S.-Iraq military facilities in Iraq. In the last five weeks, there have been nine rocket attacks on or in the vicinity of Iraqi facilities that host US troops. Earlier in the day, four rockets strike an army base near Baghdad International Airport. At least six Iraqi personnel are injured. The rockets were fired from an adjacent neighborhood and hit a barracks for Iraq's elite counterterrorism forces. Sources: [CNN](#), [Washington Post](#)
  - **December 7, 2019:** ISIS attacks a Hashd al-Shaabi unit in the disputed province of Kirkuk. The attack results in the death of at least two Hashd al-Shaabi members, and the injury of three others. Source: [Kurdistan 24](#)
  - **December 6, 2019:** Unidentified assailants launch an attack on al-Hallani Square in Baghdad. At least 16 people are killed in the attack with dozens more wounded. Iraq has been rocked by mass protests since early October, leaving 460 Iraqis killed and 17,000 injured, Iraq's High Commission for Human Rights said. Source: [Anadolu Agency](#)
  - **December 5, 2019:** Two mortars land inside Iraq's Balad air base. There are no casualties in the suspected terrorist attack. Balad base hosts U.S. forces and contractors and is located about 80 kilometers (50 miles) north of Baghdad. Source: [New York Times](#)
  - **December 3, 2019:** Five rockets land on Ain Al-Asad air base. The airbase hosts U.S. forces in Anbar province in western Iraq. No casualties are reported in the suspected terrorist attack. Source: [New York Times](#)
  - **December 2, 2019:** ISIS militants attack a Hashd Shaabi vehicle near the paramilitary's outposts in Naft Khana. Two Hashd Shaabi members are killed and four others are wounded in the attack. Reinforcement forces arrive on the scene leading to fierce clashes, killing two more paramilitary members and wounding eight others. Source: [Xinhua](#)
  - **November 10, 2019:** A roadside bomb detonates next to a Special Forces vehicle outside of Kirkuk. Five Italian Special Forces soldiers are injured in the blast. The soldiers were part of a Special Forces team who were carrying out the "mentoring and training" of Iraqi armed forces involved in the fight against ISIS. It is expected that ISIS is responsible for the IED. Source: [Time](#)
  - **October 29, 2019:** An IED detonates in Jalawla area. The attack kills three people. Ansar al Islam claims responsibility for the attack. A longstanding al-Qaeda-linked jihadist group which now mainly operates in Syria, this is Ansar al Islam's first attack in its native Iraq in five years. Though in July 2014, the Iraqi wing of Ansar al Islam suffered mass defections to ISIS. Though, the entirety of the organization did not go to ISIS, as its Syrian wing has remained independent. Source: [Long War Journal](#)
  - **October 21, 2019:** ISIS attacks a police force protecting Allas oilfield. The attack kills four and injures five others. In 2014, ISIS militants took control of Allas and nearby Ajil oilfields and extracted large amounts of oil to finance its operations, but the two oilfields were freed by the Iraqi forces in March 2015. Source: [Xinhua](#)
  - **October 10, 2019:** ISIS militants launch a gunfire and bomb attack in Diyala. While a gunman kills three and wounds four others, a roadside bomb explodes near a security vehicle, which kills and wounds three others. Source: [Xinhua](#)
  - **October 5, 2019:** Unknown gunmen attack the offices of television stations Al-Arabiya and Abu Nawas in Baghdad. Gunmen also attack the offices of Iraq's Dajla and NRT news channels. The gunmen physically assault employees and smash equipment, but no casualties are reported. Some sources suspect that Kata'ib Hezbollah ransacked television stations that had been giving full or sympathetic coverage to the demonstrations. Sources: [U.S. News](#), [Independent](#)
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- **September 21, 2019:** ISIS militants leave a bomb on a minibus which later explodes at a checkpoint near Karbala, a major Iraqi pilgrimage center.  
The attack kills 12. The attack stands out because most of the ISIS's attacks have mostly focused on members of the Iraqi security forces, local mayors, and occasionally other civil servants. This attack specifically targeted the Shiite community during a particularly holy period. Source: [New York Times](#)
- **September 10, 2019:** The U.S. Air Force launches airstrikes on Qanus Island, Saladin Province.  
A spokesperson for the U.S.-led coalition said the strikes were aimed at destroying a "major transit hub" for ISIS forces moving between the Jazeera desert into the Mosul region. It was followed by a ground operation by Iraqi forces. Source: [Independent](#)
- **August 27, 2019:** ISIS members attack an outpost manned by AAH in Yathrib, near Baghdad.  
At least three paramilitary members are killed in the attack. ISIS members have frequently carried out hit-and-run attacks against security forces and civilians since Iraqi security forces defeated the insurgents in 2017. Source: [Xinhua](#)
- **August 20, 2019:** Several blasts hit a position held by paramilitary forces next to Balad air base north of Baghdad.  
This explosion follows a series of similar blasts that have targeted Iraq's Shiite paramilitary groups in the past few weeks. No casualties or injuries are reported, and it is uncertain who launched the attacks. Source: [U.S. News](#)
- **August 13, 2019:** An explosion occurs at an ammunition depot in southern Baghdad.  
At least one person is killed and 29 others are wounded. Earlier that day, an ammunition depot explodes inside a federal police military base, named Falcon, in Owerij area near the southern district of Doura. The explosion wounds several civilians. Source: [Xinhua](#)
- **August 3, 2019:** A car bomb explodes outside a restaurant in Mosul.  
The blast kills two and wounds another 10. It is suspected that ISIS is responsible for the attack. Source: [France 24](#)
- **August 1, 2019:** Militants ambush the Sayed Ghraib area, killing three members of the PMF and two policemen in the process.  
Separately, a mortar attack against Kurdish forces in Kola Jawi village kills two members of the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government's Asayish internal security forces and wounds another 14. It is suspected that ISIS carried out both attacks. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **July 19, 2019:** An unidentified drone bombs part of a base belonging to a Hashd al-Shaabi militia in Salahuddin, northern Iraq.  
The bombing kills one person. Earlier that day, the Iran-backed militia is targeted in Amerli, in the Tuz Khurmatu district of Salahuddin. The unidentified drone attack kills an unreported number of Hezbollah fighters and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. It is uncertain who is responsible for the attack. Source: [Defense Post](#)
- **May 30, 2019:** At least six improvised explosive devices detonate in Kirkuk.  
The blasts kill at least four people and wound another 23. It is suspected that ISIS carried out the attacks. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **May 26, 2019:** An Iraqi court sentences three French citizens to death after they were found guilty of joining ISIS.  
Captured in Syria by a U.S.-backed force fighting the jihadists, they are the first French ISIS members to receive death sentences in Iraq, where they were transferred for trial. Source: [Guardian](#)
- **May 19, 2019:** A roadside bomb hits a bus transporting a Shiite paramilitary group in the eastern town of Balad Ruz.  
The attack kills seven and wounds 26. It is expected that ISIS targeted the Shiite forces. Also on the 19th, a roadside bomb detonates in the Tarmiyah area. The blast kills two. In another attack the same day, an explosive detonates near an army patrol also in the Tarmiyah area. The blast wounds two. It is suspected that ISIS is responsible for the attacks. Sources: [Fox News](#), [Xinhua](#)
- **May 19, 2019:** A missile is launched from Amana Bridge in Baghdad, reportedly aimed at the American embassy but landing in an empty field near the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.  
No casualties are reported. According to a senior official in the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Services (CTS) the rocket was launched by KH. Source: [Daily Beast](#)
- **May 10, 2019:** A suicide bomber detonates his vest in a market in Sadr City.  
The attack kills at least four civilians and wounds six others. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **May 14, 2019:** KH attacks two Saudi Arabia oil facilities using explosive-laden drones launched from their base in Jurf as-Sakr on the outskirts of Baghdad.  
Source: [CTC Sentinel](#)
- **May 4, 2019:** PKK rebels launch mortar attacks from Iraqi territory.  
Three Turkish soldiers are killed and one is injured in the attack. Source: [France 24](#)
- **May 1, 2019:** AAH militants fire rockets at U.S. contractors working in Taji.  
Local security forces arrest two AAH militants shortly after. Source: [CTC Sentinel](#)
- **April 11, 2019:** Unidentified attacks open fire from a car in Sadr City district.  
The attack kills three. Also on the 11th, a bomb detonates in Mullah Abdullah town in northern Kirkuk. The attack kills two and injures one other. No group claims responsibility for either attack. Source: [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **March 27, 2019:** Austrian authorities arrest a 42-year-old Iraqi man suspected of carrying out unsuccessful attacks on trains in Germany in October and December of 2018 and sympathizing with ISIS.  
In early October, a high-speed train hit a steel cable stretched over the tracks between electrification masts on the Nuremberg-Munich line. A window in the driver's cab was damaged but no one was injured. An Arabic-language note, which investigators have described as threatening but unspecific, was found nearby as well as other documents suggesting a link to ISIS. At Christmas, police found damage to overhead wires on a railway line in Berlin's eastern suburbs as well as a note in Arabic and an ISIS flag. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **March 7, 2019:** Militants ambush a convoy of pro-government, Shiite Muslim paramilitary fighters in Makhmour.  
At least seven are killed and another 30 are wounded. It is suspected that ISIS fighters carried out the attack. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **February 23, 2019:** ISIS militants ambush a camp site near Therthar Lake.

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At least five fishermen are killed. Source: [Fox News](#)

- **January 30, 2019:** German police arrest three Iraqi refugees suspected of planning a terror attack in the state of Schleswig-Holstein. Investigators allege the two 23-year-olds, Shahin F. and Hersh F., downloaded bomb-making instructions from the Internet and tried to purchase a detonation device from the United Kingdom. British authorities were able to halt the shipment of the detonation device to Germany. Source: [Deutsche Welle](#)
- **January 28, 2019:** Roadside bombs detonates and strikes two police convoys in Shirqat, northern Iraq. Four officers are killed and 11 others are injured. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [Arab News](#)
- **January 12, 2019:** The Al Forat satellite network, owned by AHH political rival Hikma, reports that AHH was involved in the assassination of Imad Jabar, a restaurant owner in the east of Baghdad. The report drives AAH and its leader to launch a fierce media campaign against Hikma, accusing the party of controlling state buildings and lands in the neighborhood of Jadiriya in Baghdad, and calling for large demonstrations near the party's headquarters to condemn the TV report. Source: [Asharq Al-Awsat](#)
- **December 25, 2018:** A car bomb explodes in the northern city of Tal Afar. The explosion kills two people and wounds 11. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **November 18, 2018:** A car bomb detonates near Tikrit. At least five people are killed and another 16 are wounded. No group claims responsibility for the attack although it is suspected that ISIS is responsible. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **October 23, 2018:** A vehicle packed with explosives detonates in a crowded market area in Qayyara, northern Iraq. At least six people are killed and 30 others are wounded. It is suspected that ISIS carried out the attack. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **October 19, 2018:** An Iraqi-born Chicago man is placed in federal custody and charged with using ISIS social media platforms to recruit violent jihadists. Federal investigators state that the web developer used written social media posts, audio clips, and videos to recruit terrorists. His detention hearing is scheduled for October 25, 2019. Source: [ABC 7](#)
- **October 8, 2018:** A group of suspected ISIS fighters open fire on security checkpoint in Mosul, killing two policemen. The militants escape after the attack. Source: [Iraqi News](#)
- **October 7, 2018:** A car bomb in southern Baghdad wounds at least four people. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Source: [Iraqi News](#)
- **September 17, 2018:** A bomb in western Baghdad wounds two soldiers. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Source: [Iraqi News](#)
- **September 12, 2018:** A car bomb outside a restaurant near Tikrit City kills at least six and wounds 42. There are no immediate claims of responsibility but police suspect ISIS of planting the bomb. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **September 7, 2018 - September 8, 2018:** On September 7, three mortars land in Baghdad's Green Zone, where the U.S. embassy is located. On September 8, The U.S. consulate in Basra is hit by rocket fire. There are no casualties or damage in either attack. Separately, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) fires seven missiles at an Iraqi base used by Iranian Kurdish dissidents, killing at least 11 and wounding dozens. The U.S. government blames Iran for the attacks on U.S. targets. Iran dismisses the allegations. On September 28, the U.S. State Department closed and evacuated its consulate in Basra. Sources: [CBS News](#), [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#), [Reuters](#)
- **August 30, 2018:** A suicide bomber drives a car into a checkpoint near Kirkuk, killing two policemen and wounding three. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **August 29, 2018:** A suicide car bomber drives into a checkpoint in western Iraq, killing at least eight and wounding three. ISIS claims responsibility. ISIS claims the attack killed 25, contradicting official numbers. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#)
- **August 22, 2018:** A suicide bomber explodes at the home of a former Iraqi lawmaker in the village of Asdira, killing at least six tribal militiamen and wounding seven others. The lawmaker is unharmed. There are no immediate claims of responsibility, but authorities suspect ISIS. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **July 23, 2018:** Three gunmen attack the governorate building in Irbil, taking a guard hostage. Kurdish security forces kill the gunmen after a five-hour-long standoff that also leaves a government employee dead and two policemen wounded. There are conflicting government reports over whether two of the gunmen set off suicide explosives. Irbil officials suspect ISIS. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [Deutsche Welle](#), [Reuters](#)
- **June 18, 2018:** Militants at a security checkpoint south of Mosul kill six people, including two members of the Hashd al-Ashaeri militia fighting alongside the Iraqi army. ISIS claims responsibility. Local officials say the militants use the fake checkpoints to target security personnel. Source: [Albawaba News](#)
- **June 6, 2018:** An ammunition cache explodes inside a Shiite mosque in Baghdad, killing 17 and wounding 80. The mosque is frequented by supporters of cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, whose political alliance won 54 seats in Iraq's parliamentary elections the previous month. Police believe the weapons belonged to an armed group but do not know what caused the explosion. Source: [BBC News](#)
- **June 2, 2018:** ISIS militants attack the village of al-Farahatayah in the Salahuddin province, killing 12 members of one family. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **May 24, 2018:** Eight militants attack a group of security officials in Kirkuk. Four of the militants are killed while the other four set off suicide bombs, killing two and wounding 15. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Source: [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **May 23, 2018:** Police intercept a suicide bomber as he enters a park in Baghdad, but the bomber sets off his explosives before he can be captured.

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The explosion kills at least seven and wounds 16. The park is located in Shoala, a largely Shiite district of the capital. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Source: [Associated Press](#)

- **May 1, 2018:** Gunmen kill at least eight civilians and wound three in the town of Tarmiya, north of Baghdad. ISIS claims responsibility and claims it killed 22. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#)
- **April 22, 2018 - April 27, 2018:** On April 22, ISIS releases an audio message threatening to attack Iraqi parliamentary elections the May 12 parliamentary elections. ISIS threatens that anybody running or voting in the elections would be considered an infidel and subject to attack. On April 27, ISIS releases a video of its fighters executing what it called “two advocators” for the following month’s Iraqi elections. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **April 12, 2018:** Two bombs explode during the funeral of five PMF fighters in the town of Sharqat, killing 16 and wounding 14. ISIS claims responsibility. Separately, ISIS militants attack a police patrol in Kirkuk, wounding four. Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#), [Iraqi News](#)
- **April 7, 2018:** Two suicide bombers dressed as soldiers set off their explosives at the Al-Hal Party headquarters in the city of Hit, killing four and wounding seven. ISIS claims responsibility. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **April 5, 2018:** ISIS fighters attack a bus in Diyala province, killing several on board, according to Iraqi security sources. There are no further details on the casualties. Source: [Iraqi News](#)
- **March 11, 2018:** ISIS militants raid the house of a local Sunni sheikh in Shirqat, south of Mosul, killing the sheikh, his son, and two others. In Nijana, south of Kirkuk, militants at a fake security checkpoint kill a Shiite family of five and a passerby. There are no immediate claims of the second attack. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **February 18, 2018:** ISIS militants attack Popular Mobilization Unit security checkpoints in Hawija, south of Kirkuk, killing at least 27. It is the deadliest attack on the PMU since Iraqi forces reclaimed Hawija from ISIS in October 2017. The PMU promise to respond “with determination.” Source: [CNN](#)
- **January 15, 2018:** Two men set off suicide bombs in a Baghdad’s Tayran Square commercial area where day laborers are gathering. The blasts kill at least 27 people and wound 64. ISIS claims responsibility and says it had targeted a gathering of Shiites. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#)
- **January 13, 2018:** A suicide bombing at a police checkpoint in northern Baghdad kills 10 and wounds another 10. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Associated Press](#)
- **December 9, 2017:** Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declares that the Iraqi military has “fully liberated” Iraq from ISIS and secured control of the Iraqi-Syrian border. Source: [CNN](#)
- **November 21, 2017:** Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declares a military victory over ISIS in Iraq following the recapture of Rawa, the last ISIS-held town in the country, the previous week. Source: [Business Insider](#)
- **November 10, 2017:** ISIS is driven out of its last stronghold in Iraq, the town of Rawa. Source: [Business Insider](#)
- **September 14, 2017:** Three suicide bombers carry out attacks on two restaurants and a police checkpoint on a highway near the city of Nassiriya, killing 84 people and wounding 93 others. ISIS claims responsibility for the attacks. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Guardian](#)
- **July 10, 2017:** The Iraqi government declares victory over ISIS in Mosul, ending a campaign of nearly nine months to retake the city. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **June 21, 2017:** ISIS blows up the historic al-Nuri mosque in Mosul, from where the group initially announced its caliphate in June 2014. Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi calls ISIS’s act the “official announcement of their defeat” in Mosul. Source: [New York Times](#)
- **May 30, 2017:** Two car bombs detonate in the center of Baghdad—one outside of a busy ice cream shop—killing at least 26 people and wounding dozens of others. ISIS claims responsibility for both attacks. Sources: [BBC News](#), [New York Times](#)
- **May 7, 2017:** Multiple ISIS suicide bombers dressed as Kurdish Peshmerga fighters attack an Iraqi military base hosting U.S. military advisers in Kirkuk. Two of the bombers explode their suicide belts at the base’s gates, while Kurdish Peshmerga forces kill three of the attackers. The attack kills two and wounds six, though ISIS claims it killed and wounded dozens of “crusaders and apostates.” Source: [Reuters](#)
- **April 23, 2017:** A group of 10 militants attempts to infiltrate a Federal Police helicopter base in Al-Areej, south of Mosul. Three of the militants and three policemen are killed in the ensuing battle, while the remaining seven militants escape. ISIS claims that two of the militants detonated explosive belts. It is the first major attack in Al-Areej since Iraqi forces recaptured the city from ISIS in February. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **April 4, 2017:** Approximately 10 militants wearing police uniforms enter Tikrit in a police vehicle, target a police patrol, and break into a police officer’s house. Police kill three suicide bombers before they can set off their explosives, but two suicide bombers detonate their explosives, killing 31 people and wounding more than 40 others. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#)
- **February 14, 2017 - February 16, 2017:** Two bombings in Baghdad kill 24 people on February 14 and 15. On February 16, a car bomb kills at least 48 people in a predominately Shiite area of Baghdad. ISIS claims responsibility for the February 16 attack, saying that it targeted a “gathering of Shias.” Source: [BBC News](#)

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- **January 8, 2017:** Five suicide bombings in and around Baghdad kill 23 people and wound 37. A body taken from the scene of the first suicide bombing explodes in a morgue refrigerator. Officials say the body was of a second intended attacker who was killed by shrapnel from the first explosion. ISIS claims at least one of the attacks, saying that it wanted to kill Shiites. Sources: [CNN](#), [Associated Press](#)
  - **January 2, 2017:** A suicide bomber drives an explosive-filled pickup truck into a Baghdad market, killing at least 36 and wounding 52. ISIS claims responsibility. Source: [Associated Press](#)
  - **December 22, 2016:** Three suicide car bombs kill at least 15 civilians and eight Iraqi policemen in a market in Kokjali, a suburb of Mosul. ISIS claims responsibility. Source: [Reuters](#)
  - **December 11, 2016:** A suicide car bomber at a security checkpoint and a second bomb in a parked car near the city center kill eight people in Fallujah. ISIS claims responsibility. ISIS's Amaq news agency says suicide bombers are responsible for both attacks. Source: [Reuters](#)
  - **November 24, 2016:** A car bomb explodes at a service station and restaurant in Hilla, Iraq, killing at least 80 people and wounding at least 40 others. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [Associated Press](#), [CBS News](#)
  - **November 17, 2016:** A suicide car bomb kills at least 40 people and wounds more than 60 others at a police officer's wedding in Amiriyat al-Fallujah, Iraq. There are no immediate claims of responsibility, but police suspect ISIS. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
  - **November 1, 2016:** Militants shoot or behead more than 300 Iraqi policemen and bury them in a mass grave in Hammam al-Alil, a town south of Mosul, Iraq. Iraqi authorities suspect ISIS of responsibility for the executions. Source: [Reuters](#)
  - **July 2, 2016 - July 3, 2016:** Just before midnight on July 2, a suicide truck bomb kills more than 200 and wounds at least 175 in the Karrada shopping district in Baghdad. The bombing is the deadliest attack in Iraq in 13 years. Just after midnight on July 3, a bomb explodes at an outdoor market in Baghdad's Shaab neighborhood, killing five. Both neighborhoods targeted are predominately Shiite. ISIS claims responsibility for both bombings. Sources: [CNN](#), [CNN](#), [BBC News](#), [CNN](#)
  - **January 15, 2016:** Three Americans are kidnapped late at night from an apartment building in southern Baghdad. The area is reportedly under the control of Shiite militias. According to neighbors, the apartment building frequently underwent raids by AAH. Sources: [Washington Post](#), [Reuters](#)
  - The Badr Organization engages in a series of abductions and killings targeting Sunnis throughout the month—retaliatory attacks that Human Rights Watch characterizes as “serious violations of international humanitarian law.” Source: [Reuters](#)
  - ISIS captures the city of Ramadi in western Iraq. Iraqi forces recapture the city late that December. Sources: [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#)
  - **April 10, 2015:** ISIS launches an assault, which includes suicide and car bombers, on Ramadi, Iraq. The group seizes northern parts of the city by the end of the day. At least 10 Iraqi soldiers are killed and General Qassim al-Muhammadi, Iraq's military head in Anbar province, is wounded. Source: [CNN](#)
  - **February 17, 2015:** ISIS militants burn to death 45 Iraqis, many of them suspected to be members of Iraqi security forces. Source: [BBC News](#)
  - **February 13, 2015:** ISIS launches a suicide attack on the al-Asad airbase in Iraq's Anbar province, where U.S. and coalition troops are training Iraqi forces. A Pentagon spokesman states that an estimated 20-25 extremists, disguised as Iraqi soldiers, are involved in the attack. Most are killed by their suicide vests or by Iraqi forces. No Iraqi or U.S. troops are killed, nor are U.S. soldiers involved in the gunfight. This comes after ISIS took control of a nearby town—their first territorial gain in months. Source: [Associated Press](#)
  - **January 30, 2015:** ISIS attacks oil-rich Kirkuk in northern Iraq after months of fighting the Kurdish Peshmerga. The attack is possibly a diversion against Kurdish efforts to take Mosul, ISIS's stronghold. Brigadier General Shirko Fateh, the highest-ranking operational commander of the Peshmerga brigade, is killed by ISIS. Source: [CNN](#)
  - **December 17, 2014:** ISIS fighter Abu Anas Al-Libi murders over 150 women and girls—some of whom are pregnant—for refusing to partake in sexual acts and marriage with ISIS fighters. The women and girls' bodies are buried in mass graves west of Baghdad. Source: [Al Arabiya](#)
  - **October 19, 2014 - October 20, 2014:** On October 19, a suicide bomber kills 18 and wounds 35 at a Shiite mosque in Baghdad. Two roadside bombs in Baghdad also kill eight and wound 12. On October 20, four car bombs near the Shiite shrines of Imam Hussein and Abbas in Karbala kill 22 people and wound 51. Iraqi authorities suspect ISIS of responsibility for the bombings. Source: [New York Times](#)
  - **October 14, 2014:** An ISIS bomber kills 24 and wounds 40 at a crowded checkpoint in a Shiite-majority neighborhood in Baghdad. Among the dead are Ahmed al-Khafaji, a Shiite member of parliament and of the Badr Organization. Source: [New York Times](#)
  - **September 24, 2014:** ISIS militants blow up the “Green Church” in Tikrit, Iraq, an ancient and holy site for Christians. Source: [New York Times](#)
  - **August 22, 2014:** A suicide bomber explodes at the entrance of a Sunni mosque in Iraq's Diyala Province. Shiite gunmen then storm the mosque and open fire, killing 60 people. Source: [New York Daily News](#)
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- **August 11, 2014:** ISIS militants defeat Kurdish Peshmerga forces in the municipality of Jalawla, Iraq.  
Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
  - **August 7, 2014:** ISIS fighters take control of Qaraqosh, the largest Christian municipality in Iraq. Tens of thousands of its residents flee. ISIS also takes control of the strategically vital Mosul dam, driving out Kurdish Peshmerga forces from several towns. Hundreds of thousands of Yazidis flee the area. Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#), [Associated Press](#)
  - **July 25, 2014:** ISIS blows up the shrine at the reputed burial site of the biblical prophet Jonah in Mosul. ISIS has destroyed numerous shrines and mosques that it considers in conflict with early Islamic principles. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
  - An attack on a suspected Baghdad brothel kills 32 women and two men. AAH is suspected.  
Source: [Vice News](#)
  - **June 29, 2014:** ISIS declares an “Islamic caliphate” from Diyala province in Iraq to Aleppo in northern Syria, and renames itself as simply the “Islamic State.”  
ISIS proclaims the group’s leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as caliph, and urges Muslims to pledge their allegiance to him. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
  - **June 10, 2014 - September 2, 2014:** ISIS carries out “ethnic cleansing on a historic scale in northern Iraq... systematically target[ing] non-Arab and non-Sunni Muslim communities, killing or abducting hundreds, possibly thousands, and forcing more than 830,000 others to flee the areas it has captured,” according to Amnesty International.  
The United Nations says more than 2,400 Iraqis are killed in June, the most fatalities in one month in Iraq since April 2005. Sources: [Amnesty International](#), [Associated Press](#)
  - **June 15, 2014:** AAH beheads two allegedly gay teenagers and throws their heads in the garbage.  
Source: [Vice News](#)
  - **June 11, 2014 - June 14, 2014:** On June 11, ISIS insurgents take over Tikrit, hometown of Saddam Hussein and his clan. On June 12, ISIS forces attack Camp Speicher, a former U.S. Army base in Tikrit, killing between 1,095 and 1,700 Shiite Iraqi cadets and captives over three days.  
ISIS separates captives based on Islamic sect. ISIS gives Sunnis the opportunity to repent for serving the Iraqi government, while Shiites are executed. According to witnesses, approximately 3,000 trained Iraqi soldiers changed into civilian clothing and abandoned the camp when ISIS attacked rather than defend it. The exact number of casualties remains unverified. ISIS claims it killed 1,700 Shiite soldiers, which would make the massacre the worst sectarian massacres in recent Iraqi history. Human Rights Watch says satellite imagery and ISIS photos confirmed at least between 560 and 770 men were killed, but the final toll could be greater. Photos show ISIS lining up and shooting Iraqi cadets. Some bodies are thrown into the Tigris River, while others are deposited in mass graves. On July 9, 2015, Iraq’s Supreme Judicial Council in Baghdad sentences 24 suspected ISIS members to death for participation in the massacre. The suspects deny taking part in the massacre and claim Iraqi authorities had tortured them into confessing. In August 2016, Iraqi authorities hang 36 men convicted of participating in the massacre. In August 2017, an Iraqi court sentences another 27 men to death for participating in the massacre. Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#), [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [Middle East Monitor](#), [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#)
  - **June 10, 2014:** ISIS insurgents take over Mosul, Iraq’s second largest city, as Iraqi soldiers flee on foot and leave behind their weapons, vehicles, and uniforms.  
After seizing Mosul and securing its hold over Nineveh Province, the ISIS militants move south toward Baghdad, taking over parts of Salahuddin Province along the way. Five days after the offensive, ISIS claims that it has executed 1,700 mostly Shiite Iraqi soldiers. The Iraqi military admits that at least 800 soldiers have been taken prisoner. ISIS also robs local banks and seizes U.S. military equipment left for the Iraqi army. Sources: [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [International Business Times](#)
  - **June 1, 2014 - July 9, 2014:** Sixty-one Sunni men are killed in villages and towns around Baghdad, according to a Human Rights Watch report.  
Witnesses and government officials blame the deaths on AAH and other Shiite militias. Source: [New York Times](#)
  - - : Forty-eight Sunni men are killed in villages and towns around Baghdad, according to a Human Rights Watch report.  
Witnesses and government officials blame the deaths on AAH and other Shiite militias. Source: [New York Times](#)
  - After days of intense fighting, ISIS militants take over major parts of Fallujah, destroy the police headquarters there, and declare the city an Islamic state.  
Source: [New York Times](#)
  - - : As many as 50 Sunnis are killed in Basra, Iraq, during a wave of violence blamed on AAH and other Shiite militias.  
At least 59 Sunni families flee Basra and the neighboring Nasiriya province after threatening letters are left on the doors of families from Basra’s main Sunni tribe. Source: [New York Review of Books](#)
  - **September 27, 2013:** A suicide bomber drives a mini-bus into the gates outside the headquarters of the Kurdish secret police in Irbil, capital of the Kurdish semi-autonomous region.  
After the bus explodes, four additional attackers wearing explosives open fire on Kurdish forces. Police kill three of the attackers, but one sets off his explosives. A nearby explosives-filled ambulance detonates soon after emergency workers arrive. The attacks kill six and wound 62. It is the first attack in Irbil since 2007. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Source: [Stars & Stripes](#)
  - **August 23, 2013:** A series of more than a dozen explosions hit Shiite neighborhoods of Baghdad during the morning commute, killing at least 65 and wounding dozens more.  
The attacks follow a string of recent beheadings that are claimed by ISIS. Source: [New York Times](#)
  - **July 23, 2013:** As part of its “Breaking the Walls” campaign, ISI militants stage “carefully synchronized operations” to break members of the organization out of the Abu Ghraib and Taji prisons.
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Al-Qaeda claims that 500 inmates are freed from the prisons, while Iraqi officials put the total at 800—with 400 of them recaptured or killed.  
Source: [New York Times](#)

- **April 9, 2013:** ISI leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announces that his organization has officially merged with the Nusra Front in Syria, forming the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS).  
However, the Nusra Front subsequently rejects the merger and remains a separate group. Sources: [New York Times](#), [BBC News](#)
- **January 14, 2012:** Militants detonate a bomb near a tent in Basra where Shiite pilgrims celebrating the holiday of Arbæen are eating breakfast. The explosion kills at least 53 and wounds more than 130. Source: [New York Times](#)
- **November 14, 2011:** A roadside bomb kills U.S. soldier David Hickman, the last military casualty before the U.S. completes its pullout from Iraq.  
AAH is later blamed for the attack. Source: [New York Times](#)
- **August 15, 2011:** A series of 42 “apparently coordinated” attacks using suicide bombs, car bombs, and gunmen kill at least 89 people and wound 315 others across Iraq.  
The attacks target Iraqi policemen and soldiers, as well as a market in Kut and a mosque in Yusufiya. ISI is suspected. Source: [New York Times](#)
- AAH and other Iran-backed militias execute attacks on U.S. military bases in Iraq, killing 13 U.S. soldiers.  
Source: [New York Times](#)
- **May 5, 2011:** A suicide bomber blows himself up at a police training center in the majority Shiite city of Hilla, killing 25 and wounding at least 75.  
Source: [New York Times](#)
- **October 31, 2010:** Gunmen wearing suicide vests attack a Catholic church in Baghdad, taking more than 100 people hostage.  
During the ensuing siege, at least 30 hostages are killed and 41 are wounded. Source: [New York Times](#)
- **May 10, 2010:** A series of shooting and bombing attacks in Baghdad, Fallujah, Samarra, Tarmiya, and Suwayra kill more than 100 people and wound hundreds.  
Source: [New York Times](#)
- U.S. forces release AAH leader Qais al-Khazali from detention immediately following AAH’s release of British hostage Peter Moore.  
Soon after, AAH leadership reportedly moves to Iran, where they continue to direct attacks against U.S. forces, Sadrists, and Iraqi political figures. Sources: [Washington Post](#), [Institute for the Study of War](#)
- **October 25, 2009:** Two car bombings strike the Iraqi Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works, killing more than 155 and injuring more than 500. ISI claims responsibility.  
Source: [New York Times](#)
- **September 16, 2009:** AAH fires two rockets at the International (Green) Zone in Al Karkh district in Baghdad, injuring two civilians.  
The attack coincides with the end of a meeting between U.S. Vice President Joseph Biden and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Source: [Global Terrorism Database](#)
- **July 17, 2009:** Militants attack an army base in Basra with mortar rounds, killing three American soldiers.  
Source: [New York Times](#)
- **April 23, 2009 - April 24, 2009:** On April 23, a woman detonates herself among a group of women and children waiting for emergency food aid in Baghdad, killing 20 and wounding at least 60.  
The next day, two suicide bombings near the revered Shiite shrine of Imam Musa al-Kadhim and his grandson kill at least 60. Sources: [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#)
- **April 6, 2009:** Six car bombs detonate in Shiite neighborhoods in Baghdad, killing at least 33 and wounding dozens.  
Source: [New York Times](#)
- **February 9, 2009:** A suicide bomber detonates his vehicle in Mosul, killing four American soldiers.  
Source: [New York Times](#)
- **January 2, 2009:** A suicide bomber detonates himself during a meeting of nearly 1,000 tribal leaders in Yusufiya, killing at least 24 and wounding about 40.  
Source: [BBC News](#)
- **December 11, 2008:** A suicide bomber detonates his explosives at a restaurant in Kirkuk on the Muslim holiday of Eid.  
The attack kills at least 55 people and wounds 120 others. There are no immediate claims of responsibility, but al-Qaeda is suspected. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Daily Mail](#)
- **July 28, 2008:** A female suicide bomber blows herself up in Kirkuk in the middle of demonstrations against Iraqi legislation on limiting Kurdish autonomy.  
The attack kills 17 and wounds 47. An angry Kurdish mob blames Turkmen extremists and sets fire to Turkmen offices. At least 25 Turkmen guards are wounded. Ensuing clashes with Turkmen guards leave 12 Kurds dead and 102 people wounded. The riots are the worst ethnic clashes since the 2003 U.S. invasion. Also that morning, two women wearing suicide vests and a third carrying a bomb in a bag detonate their explosives in Baghdad, killing 32 people and wounding 64 others, all Shiite pilgrims. Altogether, the attacks kill at least 61 people and wound 238. Source: [New York Times](#)
- **February 19, 2008:** KH launches an IRAM attack at a U.S. base southeast of Baghdad.  
The attack by KH kills one U.S. civilian and injures additional coalition force personnel and U.S. civilians. Source: [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#)
- **May 29, 2007:** More than 100 AAH militants raid Iraq’s Ministry of Finance in Baghdad and kidnap Peter Moore, a British computer consultant, and his four security guards.

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- The AAH attack is reportedly led and masterminded by Iran's IRGC-Quds Force. Sources: [Institute for the Study of War](#), [Guardian](#), [Guardian](#)
- **March 27, 2007 - March 28, 2007:** On March 27, ISI militants detonate truck bombs in markets in Tal Afar, killing 85 and wounding 183. On March 28, JAM gunmen storm homes in a Sunni neighborhood in Tal Afar, killing 70, kidnapping 40, and injuring 30. The JAM attacks are reportedly in retaliation for the previous day's bombings. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)
  - **March 12, 2007:** ISI militants douse with gasoline and set ablaze at least 31 houses in a predominately Shiite neighborhood of Diyala, Iraq. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)
  - - : Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) launches a number of rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and improvised rocket-assisted mortars (IRAMs) at U.S. targets in Iraq. Source: [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#)
  - **February 3, 2007:** A suicide bomber detonates a truck bomb in a heavily Shiite populated neighborhood of Iraq, killing 135. The bombing is the deadliest single attack since the beginning of the Iraq war in 2003. Source: [Reuters](#)
  - **January 20, 2007:** AAH kills five American soldiers in an attack on the Iraqi government's provincial headquarters in Karbala. Sources: [Institute for the Study of War](#), [CNN](#)
  - The Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) continues its deadly bombing campaign, targeting predominantly Shiite populations. In January 2007, the U.S. begins its "surge," deploying an additional 30,000 troops to Iraq, completing the deployment in June that year, and bringing the total number of troops in Iraq to 150,000. Source: [New York Times](#)
  - **July 17, 2006:** AAH claims responsibility for attacks on Coalition Forces in Karbala and Hillah in Iraq. Source: [Institute for the Study of War](#)
  - **May 6, 2006:** Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) shoots down a British Lynx helicopter in Basra, Iraq, killing five. Source: [BBC News](#)
  - **February 22, 2006:** AQI militants dressed as Iraqi police commanders bomb the al-Askari Mosque in Samarra, Iraq, one of the country's four major Shiite shrines, and the burial place of two of the 12 revered Shiite imams. The attack sets off a wave of intensified Shiite-Sunni attacks across Iraq. Sources: [Long War Journal](#), [New York Times](#)
  - AQI increases the frequency of attacks throughout the year, targeting U.S.-led coalition forces and Iraqi Shiites. In late 2005, during operations in Iraq, U.S. forces confiscate a letter from Ayman al-Zawahiri that describes the organization's long-term global strategy. The letter also criticizes Zarqawi for videotaping and distributing footage of beheadings, saying that such violence could alienate the Islamic world from al-Qaeda's cause. Source: [New York Times](#)
  - In May, Zarqawi "inaugurates his notorious wave of hostage beheadings," making American citizen Nicholas Berg his first victim. Later that month, a suicide bomber with suspected ties to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi blows himself up near the U.S.-led coalition headquarters in Baghdad, killing the acting president of the Iraqi Governing Council, Ezzedine Salim. Sources: [Atlantic](#), [New York Times](#)
  - An August 7 car bombing of the Jordanian embassy in Baghdad kills at least 10 and wounds about 40. Two weeks later, a truck bombing of the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad kills 17—including the U.N. representative—and injures 100. Finally, on August 29, a car bombing outside of the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf, Iraq—one of the holiest sites for Shiite Muslims—kills revered cleric Ayatollah Mohamad Bakr al-Hakim and 100 others. All three attacks are tied to al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Sources: [CNN](#), [CNN](#), [CNN](#)
  - **August 2, 1990 - February 28, 1991:** On August 2, 1990, Iraq bombs Kuwait City and invades Kuwait. On November 29, 1990, the U.N. Security Council passes Resolution 678, imposing a January 15, 1991, deadline for Iraqi forces to withdraw and authorizing force if Iraq does not withdraw. On January 16, a U.S.-led coalition of 34 nations begin a 43-day bombing campaign of Iraq and Kuwait, which ends with the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi forces. Sources: [U.N. Security Council](#), [U.S. Army](#)
  - - : On September 22, 1980, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein invades Iran, sparking an eight-year war. The United States provides support to both sides in a pitch to keep either side from dominating the region. On August 20, 1988, a U.N.-brokered ceasefire takes effect. Sources: [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#)

## **Domestic Counter-Extremism**

### *Anti-ISIS Counterterrorism*

In January 2014, ISIS captured the city of Fallujah in Anbar Province. By June 2014, the militants had seized Mosul, Iraq's second largest city. Following its capture of the Nineveh Province, ISIS continued south to capture swaths of territory throughout the Tigris Valley and Sinjar Province. Subsequently, the Iraqi government shifted the focus of its domestic counterterrorism operations to defeating ISIS. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#))

On September 10, 2014, the United States formed the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS, which is comprised of 73 countries, to counter the terrorist group's territorial gains. According to the U.S. State Department, coalition partners are "providing military support, impeding the flow of foreign fighters, preventing ISIS financing and funding, addressing humanitarian crises in the region, and exposing ISIS's true nature." Through Operation

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Inherent Resolve—the official name of the coalition’s operation, the coalition has primarily focused on training, equipping, advising, and assisting the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), as well as Kurdish military forces. Eighteen coalition partners, including the United States, have deployed military personnel to Iraq to participate in operational missions. Twelve coalition members have conducted thousands of airstrikes in Iraq. According to the U.S. Department of Defense, the United States has taken the lead role among coalition partners in the air campaign against ISIS. As of June 21, 2017, the United States had conducted 8,882 of the coalition’s total 12,996 airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq. On April 30, 2018, the coalition announced the “deactivation” of its land forces headquarters, signaling the end of major combat operations against ISIS in Iraq. The U.S.-led coalition declared that it would continue to provide training and development to the Iraqi military. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Global Coalition Against Daesh](#), [U.S. Department of Defense](#), [U.S. Department of Defense](#), [Reuters](#))

At its height in 2014, ISIS controlled approximately 40 percent of Iraq. The State Department reported that while Iraq continued to experience a surge of terrorist activity in 2015, ISIS achieved no strategic victories after its capture of Ramadi in May 2015. By the conclusion of 2015, ISIS had lost more than 40 percent of its territory to the Iraqi military and Global Coalition efforts. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Al Jazeera](#))

In mid-October 2016, U.S.-backed Iraqi forces began a campaign to liberate Mosul. According to Iraqi military sources, ISIS fighters knew that Mosul was “their last land, so they [tried] their best to kill as many as possible.” In an audio recording released in early November 2016, Baghdadi urged his followers to fight to the death in Iraq. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [BBC News](#), [Washington Post](#), [CNN](#), [Washington Post](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Reuters](#), [CBS News](#), [Guardian](#))

As of March 2017, Iraqi forces had liberated the eastern half of Mosul and Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared that the battle had reached its “final stages.” The same month, Baghdadi and ISIS’s leadership reportedly abandoned Mosul, leaving lower-level commanders to confront Iraqi forces. In April 2017, the Iraqi military estimated that ISIS held only 6.8 percent of Iraqi territory. That May, Iraqi authorities reported that they had killed ISIS’s military commander in western Mosul and recaptured key districts of the city. On July 10, 2017, the Iraqi government declared victory against ISIS in Mosul after an almost-nine-month battle. Iraqi officials tempered their celebrations, however, acknowledging that they still needed to clear away explosives and ISIS fighters hiding in parts of the city. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Newsweek](#), [Reuters](#), [Wall Street Journal](#))

ISIS continued to lose territory in Iraq after its defeat in Mosul, and following the November 17 recapture of Rawa, the last ISIS-held town in Iraq, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared military victory over ISIS in the country. On December 9, Abadi announced that Iraq was fully liberated from ISIS and that the Iraqi-Syrian border was fully secure. However, Iraqi security officials have acknowledged that the group will likely shift its goal from capturing and ruling territory to carrying out insurgent-style attacks in the country. ISIS leaders have reportedly drawn up plans to revert back to guerrilla warfare after their territorial defeat. (Sources: [CBS News](#), [Business Insider](#), [Reuters](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Washington Post](#), [Reuters](#), [New York Times](#), [CNN](#))

Iraq has continued to launch military operations against the remnants of ISIS in the country. Iraqi military forces are also cooperating with NATO forces to combat ISIS. In the first half of 2020, Iraq intensified efforts against ISIS and its leadership. For example, in coordination with the Iraqi government the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS targeted three ISIS camps in Kirkuk in June 2020. The following month, the Iraqi military launched a series of operations around the town of Tarmiyah north of Baghdad. The operation uncovered an underground ISIS training camp that the military alleged was used to train fighters against Iraqi military forces. Iraqi forces discovered at least five ISIS hideouts and several fugitives during the operation. (Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Voice of America](#), [Asharq Al-Awsat](#), [Asharq Al-Awsat](#))

After an ISIS double suicide bombing killed 32 people and wounded 110 others in Baghdad January 21, 2021, the Iraqi government launched Operation Revenge of the Martyrs. On January 28, security forces killed the top ISIS commander in Iraq, Abu Yasser al-Issawi, a.k.a. [Jabbar Salman Ali Farhan al-Issawi](#), in Kirkuk. On February 2, an airstrike in southern Iraq by the U.S.-led coalition killed two ISIS commanders—Abu Hassan al-Gharibawi and Ghanem Sabah Jawad—allegedly involved in the planning of the January 21 suicide attacks. Gharibawi was ISIS’s leader in southern Iraq. On February 20, security forces reportedly killed the local commander of ISIS operations in the Tarmiya area. On October 11, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi announced the capture of Sami Jasim, ISIS’s former deputy and head of finance. According to Kadhimi, the Iraqi National Intelligence Service captured Jasim in an operation outside of Iraq’s borders. Kadhimi did not confirm where the operation took place, but an Iraqi military source told media it happened in Turkey. Other military sources say Jasim was captured in northwestern Syria. Turkish intelligence reportedly aided in Jasim’s capture. Iraqi forces also continued to carry out airstrikes against ISIS targets throughout 2021. On November 22, Iraqi forces struck ISIS targets in the Hamrin mountains. On December 20, Iraqi forces bombed ISIS targets in northeastern Iraq. (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [BBC News](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Al-Monitor](#))

Murder and terrorism are punishable by death in Iraq. The country continues to carry out executions of those convicted of participating in or supporting terrorism. On December 14, 2021, officials in Nasiriyah hanged three men convicted of terrorism offenses. In 2020, Iraq hanged 45 people—the fourth highest total in the world, according to Amnesty International, but a decrease from 2019. Between January and August 2019

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alone, Iraq reportedly executed more than 100 people accused of affiliation with ISIS. Human rights groups have accused Iraqi authorities of carrying out death sentences without providing fair trials. According to the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, those accused of terrorism in Iraq “could see the denial of their fundamental civil rights” because officials have elevated the country’s Anti-Terrorism Law over criminal procedural codes. Human rights groups have accused Iraqi authorities of making arrests without warrants and detaining suspects for prolonged periods without charge or registration. Further, Iraqi courts have allegedly accepted and primarily relied on forced confessions as evidence in ISIS-related cases. (Sources: [Arab News](#), [Amnesty International](#), [World Coalition Against the Death Penalty](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

On March 27, 2022, media sources reported that Iraq is set to build a concrete wall along part of its border with Syria in an attempt to stop ISIS fighters from infiltrating the country. The first section of the wall was built in Nineveh province, northwest Iraq. Iraq originally built a fence in 2018 along the Syrian border for the same reason. (Source: [The National](#))

On August 18, 2022, the Iraqi army and the Kurdish Peshmerga forces launched the fifth phase of Operation Solid Will, targeting ISIS remnants in Diyala and Tuz Khurmatu. On August 22, Iraqi forces announced they had killed six prominent ISIS leaders, including Abu Maryam al-Qahtani, ISIS’s so-called general administrator of Salahaddin province. (Source: [Rudaw](#))

### *The 2003 U.S. Intervention in Iraq*

On March 20, 2003, the United States invaded Iraq under the suspicion that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction. The U.S.-led intervention, called Operation Iraqi Freedom, quickly toppled the regime. Then-U.S. President George W. Bush declared an end of major combat operations in Iraq on May 1, 2003. The United States remained in Iraq to counter an Islamist insurgency, which gave rise to groups such as ISIS’s precursor, al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). In U.S.-supervised elections in 2005, Iraqis voted along ethnic and sectarian lines and elected a Shiite coalition headed by influential cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. This consequently fueled the Sunni insurgency and resulted in additional attacks against U.S. and Iraqi forces. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [CNN](#), [New York Times](#), [American Enterprise Institute](#))

U.S. and Iraqi forces battled AQI and other insurgents out of their strongholds around Baghdad. On June 8, 2006, U.S. airstrikes killed AQI leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi near the city of Baqubah, just northeast of Baghdad. By January 2007, Bush committed an additional 20,000 troops in an attempt to bring stability to Iraq. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#))

In the fall of 2006, U.S. forces began recruiting Sunni tribes and former insurgents to take up arms against AQI in a movement called the Awakening in hopes of improving security networks throughout the Anbar Province and nearby regions. In September 2008, the U.S. military handed over security responsibilities of the province to the Iraqi forces, taking its first step toward U.S. withdrawal from the country. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Understanding War](#), [Long War Journal](#))

After taking office in January 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama announced his plans to remove U.S. combat forces from Iraq by August 2010 and to have U.S. forces in non-combat roles train, equip, and advise Iraqi forces until the end of 2011. On June 30, 2009, U.S. troops begin withdrawing from Baghdad and other Iraqi cities in accordance with an agreement made between the U.S. and Iraqi governments. By December 18, 2011, the final U.S. troops departed Iraq, ending a nearly nine-year campaign that left almost 4,500 U.S. soldiers and over 100,000 Iraqis dead. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [American Enterprise Institute](#))

### *ISIS and the Return of Foreign Militaries*

In June 2014, President Barack Obama authorized U.S. troops to return to Iraq under Operation Inherent Resolve to combat ISIS. That September, the United States formed the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh, which includes more than 80 countries. The coalition supports the Iraqi military in its counterterrorism efforts. (Sources: [U.S. Department of Defense](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh](#))

In January 2020, the Iraqi parliament passed a resolution calling for the expulsion of foreign troops from Iraq. By that month, the European Union had approximately 3,000 troops from 10 nations in Iraq. Several European nations have declared their intention to scale down their troop presence. That month, in August 2020, the United States had more than 5,000 troops in Iraq. Ahead of an August 20, 2020, meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi told the Associated Press that Iraq no longer needed direct military support on the ground from the United States. Following the meeting with Kadhimi, Trump announced the United States had few troops left in Iraq, but they would help Iraq in the face of Iranian aggression. (Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [EU Observer](#), [Associated Press](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#))

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Iran-backed militias in Iraq have called for the full withdrawal of all foreign forces, particularly those of the United States. On October 10, 2020, representatives from various militias agreed to suspend attacks on U.S. interests in Iraq in exchange for the Iraqi government presenting a plan for a U.S. withdrawal from the country. The United States drew down its forces from 5,000 to 3,000 in the fall of 2020 and completed a second drawdown of troops to 2,500 by January 15, 2021. NATO has had a military presence in Iraq since 2004. The organization launched a train-and-advise mission in Iraq in October 2018. On February 18, 2021, NATO announced it would gradually increase its troop presence in Iraq from 500 to about 4,000 and expand its role with Iraqi security institutions outside Baghdad. The increase comes at the request of the Iraqi government, according to NATO. In April 2021, the United States and Iraq reached an agreement on the eventual withdrawal of U.S. troops. According to the agreement, the U.S. role in Iraq has transitioned to training Iraqi forces and thus it was no longer necessary to maintain combat forces in the country. (Sources: [Middle East Eye](#), [Reuters](#), [New York Times](#), [Military.com](#), [Reuters](#), [Hill](#), [NBC News](#))

The United States ended its combat mission in Iraq on December 9, 2021. As of January 2024, approximately 2,500 U.S. forces remained in the country acting in a training and advisory role to Iraqi forces. Some international observers, however, have minimized the end of combat missions as a rhetorical exercise as U.S. forces remain in Iraq. Iran-backed Iraqi militias also responded negatively to the announcement. Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba said its “resistance” against the coalition would continue “until the American occupation is removed from Iraq.” HHN calls targeting the U.S. occupation “a great honor” and promises to continue supporting groups that do so. Marine General Frank McKenzie, the top U.S. commander in the Middle East, declared the United States would maintain its 2,500 troops in Iraq for the foreseeable future. McKenzie told the Associated Press the United States withdrew from bases it didn’t need and consolidated its positions, but the Iraqis “still want the presence, they still want the engagement.” McKenzie predicted ISIS would remain a threat to Iraq and “keep recreating itself, perhaps under a different name.” (Sources: [Hill](#), [Washington Post](#), [New York Times](#), [Associated Press](#), [Hill](#))

On January 5, 2024, the Iraqi government announced the initiation of a process to remove U.S. troops from the country. The decision was in response to a January 4 U.S. strike in Baghdad that killed Mushtaq Jawad Kazim al Jawari, the leader of the Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba Shiite militia. Given the planned withdrawal of U.S. forces in Iraq, the Higher Military Commission was launched in January 2024 to support military-to-military dialogue between the two countries focusing on topics from the threat of ISIS, the operational environment, and the defense capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces. On April 8, 2024, the Chief of the General Staff of the Iraqi Armed Forces, General Abdel Emir Rashid Yarallah and the Commander of U.S. Central Command, General Michael Erik Kurilla co-chaired the U.S.-Iraq Higher Military Commission Principals Meeting. In the inaugural meeting, the military officials discussed the best plan of action to preserve security cooperation and bilateral ties following the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the mission of the international Coalition for the Defeat of ISIS in Iraq. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [U.S. Department of Defense](#))

### *Combating Terrorist Financing*

In 2015, the Central Bank of Iraq issued a national decree to prevent transfers with banks and companies located within ISIS-held territory and halted the payment of salaries to government employees located within ISIS-controlled areas to prevent ISIS taxing those incomes. In July 2015, the Iraq government halted all payments to pensioners, civil servants, doctors, teachers, nurses, police, and workers at state-owned companies in ISIS-held regions. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [Reuters](#))

### *Turkish Operations in Iraq*

Turkey launched Operations Claw-Tiger and Claw-Eagle in 2020, which were focused in the border regions of northern Iraq to ensure the safety of the Turkish people and frontiers. According to media sources, the militants from the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) often hides in northern Iraq to plot terrorist attacks in Turkey. On April 18, 2022, the Turkish army launched Operation Claw Lock—a major offensive against PKK hideouts and targets in northern Iraq. The PKK is designated as a terror organization by Turkey and has had its headquarters and main facilities in northern Iraq since the early 1980s. According to Turkey’s ministry of defense, more than 50 targets were hit on April 18 in the Metina, Zap, and Avashin-Basyan regions in northern Iraq. By April 25, the ministry of defense announced that the Turkish military had cleared most of northern Iraq of PKK presence. However, there are many caves in the area which could potentially be hiding places for the terrorists. (Sources: [Hurriyet Daily News](#), [Daily Sabah](#))

A couple of months later on June 15, 2022, Turkey launched a rare ground assault into northern Iraq to counter PKK forces. According to the Turkish defense ministry, “commandos” were deployed and supported by drones and helicopters. Reportedly, the ground assault managed to hit more than 150 targets. (Source: [Defense Post](#))

## *Iraq: Extremism and Terrorism*

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### **International Counter-Extremism**

With the overwhelming rise of terrorist groups competing for power throughout Iraq, the Iraqi government has been too engaged in its own fight against terrorism to launch any significant or sustained counter-extremism efforts abroad. However, on February 24, 2017, Iraqi warplanes struck ISIS targets in neighboring Syria for the first time. An Iraqi government statement said that the strikes were in response to recent suicide bombings in Iraq. The strikes were coordinated with the Syrian government, according to the statement. The following month, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said that Iraqi forces would continue to strike ISIS positions in neighboring countries, but only with the permission of those governments.

(Sources: [Associated Press](#), [CNN](#))

### *Combating Terrorist Financing*

Since 2005, Iraq has been a member of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF), a regional organization that aims to combat terrorist financing and money laundering. From November 2013 to November 2014, Iraq held the MENAFATF presidency.

According to the U.S. State Department, the task force reviews Iraq three times a year to address any identified deficiencies in its anti-money laundering and counterterrorism financing plans. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#))

ISIS has generated significant income from a range of sources, including oil smuggling, kidnapping, for ransom, looting, extortion, taxation, antiquities theft and smuggling, and foreign donations. The U.S.-led Global Coalition to Counter ISIS has taken military action against ISIS's ability to generate revenue by targeting the militants' energy infrastructure, including modular refineries, petroleum tanks, and crude oil collection points. Additionally, the United States has levied financial sanctions on banks, companies, and individuals across the world that have been linked to ISIS.

(Source: [U.S. Department of State](#))

### **Public Opinion**

#### *Security, Democracy, and General Direction*

A December 2020 poll by the International Republican Institute's (IRI) Center for Insights in Survey Research found that 66 percent of Iraqis believed the country was heading in the wrong direction while 69 percent believed Iraqi youth do not have a good future. A plurality of 45 percent agreed that democracy was the best form of government for Iraq but 77 percent classified Iraq's democracy as either very bad or somewhat bad.

(Source: [International Republican Institute](#))

#### *ISIS*

In July 2015, the BBC commissioned conflict environment research company ORB International to conduct a public opinion poll in Iraq and Syria. The pollsters surveyed more than 1,200 Iraqis across 10 of the country's 18 governorates. Eighty-four percent of those surveyed thought that ISIS was a "strongly negative" influence in the country. Over half (56 percent), however, opposed coalition airstrikes targeting ISIS militants. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [ORB International](#))

With the fall of ISIS's caliphate, Iraqis largely do not support the reintegration of ISIS fighters or their families. A 2019 poll by the U.S.-based National Democratic Institute found that 79 percent of Iraqis would not accept suspected ISIS widows or the orphan children of ISIS fighters moving into their neighborhoods. Only 13 percent supported reintegration while a plurality supported placing family members into deradicalization centers. (Source: [National Democratic Institute](#))

#### *Iraqi Militias*

A 2019 poll by the U.S.-based National Democratic Institute found that about two out of three Iraqis favorably viewed the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), despite militias' continued attacks on foreign forces. The poll also found that 73 percent of Iraqis trusted the PMF, while fewer than

## *Iraq: Extremism and Terrorism*

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one in five listed the PMF as one of the two biggest security threats to Iraq. (Source: [National Democratic Institute](#))

### *Iraqi Migrants*

In November and December of 2015, the International Organization for Migration conducted a study called “Migration Flows from Iraq to Europe.” The study surveyed nearly 500 Iraqi migrants who departed Iraq in 2015 and were granted asylum in various European countries. Of the 473 surveyed, 80 percent cited “no hope in the future” as their primary reason for fleeing Iraq. When asked about their intentions to return, 67 percent said that they did not intend to return to Iraq, 21 percent were waiting to decide, and just 12 percent planned to return home. (Source: [International Organization for Migration](#))

### *Opinion of United States*

In its Arab Youth Survey 2016, the polling and market research firm Penn Schoen Berland surveyed 3,250 individuals, aged 18 to 24 years old, throughout 15 Arab countries, including Iraq. Of the 250 Iraqis surveyed across the cities Baghdad, Irbil, and Basra, 93 percent perceived the United States as an enemy, whereas only 6 percent perceived it as an ally. (Sources: [Arab Youth Survey 2016](#), [Intercept](#))

The Iraqi population has consistently supported the withdrawal of U.S. forces. A 2009 poll by University of Maryland found that 71 percent of Iraqis wanted the United States to withdraw within a year. The United States completed its withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 but returned in 2014 to fight ISIS. Following the death of Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani in a U.S. airstrike in January 2020, thousands of Iraqis protested outside the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad calling for a complete U.S. withdrawal. Iraqis generally viewed the targeted killing as a violation of Iraqi sovereignty. The Iraqi parliament called for a withdrawal of U.S. forces after the killing. The special parliamentary session comprised mostly Shiite lawmakers as Sunni and Kurdish parliamentarians largely boycotted the session. (Sources: [Voice of America](#), [Washington Post](#), [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#))