

Chronology of Events in Iraq, March 2004*

March 2

More than 100 killed as Shiite Muslims come under attack in Iraq. (Agence France Presse / AFP)

More than 100 people were killed in Iraq where Shiite Muslims came under attack in a series of coordinated strikes in the cities of Karbala and Baghdad, as they marked their most solemn holy day. In the sacred city of Karbala, at least 50 bodies were piled up outside the main hospital after a number of blasts rocked the city. In Baghdad the health minister said at least 54 were killed. As many as 300 were wounded in total. Rocket attacks were thought at first to be the cause of the carnage, which came as Iraq's Shiite majority commemorated a revered martyr publicly for the first time in decades. But many deaths were blamed on suicide attacks. The first blast happened in Al-Mahdi Street, near the Al-Mahdi mosque, north of the most sacred shrine in Karbala, the tomb of Hussain, the grandson of the Prophet Mohammed. Tens of thousands of Shiites, including many pilgrims who had crossed the border from neighbouring Iran, were in the city for the Ashura holy day. After the blasts near the Abbas mausoleum a journalist saw crowds set on a man, kicking him senseless, punching him and throwing rocks at him, while shots were fired in the air.

In Baghdad, security guards said four suicide attackers blew themselves up at the Kazimiyah mosque.

March 4

In Mosul, Iraqi police station attacked; four injured. (Associated Press / AP)

Four Iraqi police were injured after a police station in Mosul was attacked by militants, witnesses and officials said. The Sheik Fatihi police station was attacked with a homemade bomb and insurgents who shot at it from a car as they drove by. In another incident, a police patrol was attacked by men firing from a car in Mosul. One policeman was injured and the attackers escaped.

March 5

Translator and his family killed in Baghdad. (AFP)

Assailants in Baghdad shot dead an Iraqi translator working for Voice of America public radio and his mother and daughter. The translator was attacked while driving home.

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March 7

Attack on Mosul police station kills two Iraqis. (AP)

Two Iraqi civilians were killed and two police officers were injured when insurgents attacked a police station, police and witnesses said. Police said the al-Sukar station in the city of Mosul was shot at with rocket-propelled grenades from a passing car.

Three Jordanian drivers killed by Iraqi gunmen on Al-Fallujah road. (Iraqi Shi'i group's Iran-based radio station Voice of the Mujahidin)

Three Jordanian drivers were killed when Iraqi gunmen attacked them on Al-Ramadi-Al-Fallujah road and looted their cargos. One of the drivers who survived the attack said that an armed gang comprising 20 people and supported by a military vehicle opened fire on the Jordanian trucks driving on this highway, killing a truck driver.

Sunni cleric killed in Baghdad. (US newspaper *Los Angeles Times*)

A Sunni Muslim cleric, Sheik Ali Zahabi, was killed in a drive-by shooting as he walked to evening prayers.

March 8

Constitution celebrations turn violent in Kirkuk, three dead. (AFP)

Three Iraqis, including one woman, were killed and 20 others injured in ethnic clashes in Kirkuk after a celebration of the signing of an interim constitution turned violent, police said. Thousands of Kurds poured into the street to demonstrate. Three people, one Arab woman and two Turkmen, were reportedly killed when some demonstrators started to shoot into the air. A curfew had been imposed in the town. According to witnesses, the demonstrating Kurds had brandished pictures of Jalal Talabani - head of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, one of the two main Kurdish political parties - as well as banners and had burnt the Iraqi flag. A local official for the PUK denounced the violence and denied any relationship between his party and the demonstrators.

Sunni Muslim cleric shot dead in Baghdad. (AFP)

The leader of a Sunni Muslim mosque in western Baghdad has been shot dead in the street from a vehicle by unidentified gunmen. The imam of the Findi al-Kobaysi mosque, Ali Hussein Hassan al-Obedi was murdered by four men in a brown BMW vehicle.

March 9

Council member killed in attacks in Mosul. (*Los Angeles Times*)

Attackers opened fire on a car carrying two local council members in Mosul, killing one and wounding the other, police said.

In Mosul, grenade goes off in government building, injuring seven. (AP)

Seven people were injured after a grenade was tossed in a building housing a local governing council, police said. Seven people, including three policeman and four

Iraqis were hurt in the blast in the Bab al-Toub local council building. No attackers were caught.

Palestinian militant Abu Abbas dies in US custody in Iraq. (AFP)

Abu Abbas, head of the Palestinian Liberation Front, which assaulted an Italian cruise ship in 1985 and killed an American hostage, has died in US custody in Iraq, a Palestinian Authority official said.

March 10

Iraq firefight kills four police in Nassiriya. (Reuters)

Four Iraqi policemen were killed in a midnight firefight which ended when local police stormed the offices of a security militia in Nassiriya, a coalition official said. The shootout in front of the offices of an authorised security organisation, the Citizens Security Group (CSG), which protects political parties, occurred at night. "The shootout, that lasted more than an hour, involved local police who allegedly tried to rescue two Iraqi citizens held illegally by the CSG," said Andrea Angeli, the coalition spokesman in Nassiriya. He said Italian forces based nearby responded and were caught up in the firefight.

Ansar al-Islam official arrested in Baghdad. (Qatari Al-Jazeera satellite TV)

US forces arrested Kamaran Arbili, nicknamed Ayyub al-Afghani, in Baghdad. The arrested person is a senior security official and member of the Legislative Council of the Ansar al-Islam group, which the coalition authorities in Iraq accuse of masterminding several explosions and of collaborating with the Al-Qa'idah Organization.

Hundreds in hospital after poisoning hits Duhok. (Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party newspaper *Khabat*)

Scores of people from Khanak housing complex near Duhok, where Yezidis live, have been arriving at Duhok Hospital suffering from acute poisoning. The number of cases has reached 300-400. This happens a few days after posters were put up on walls in Mosul and other places. The posters said the killing of Yezidis was permissible. The posters said that whoever killed an Yezidi would be rewarded five fold by God.

Two Iraqi police officers shot dead near Syrian border. (AFP)

Two Iraqi police officers were shot dead by armed gunmen in a restaurant in the town of Al-Qayim near the Syrian border, the local police chief said. Armed men with masks shot dead the two officers as they were seated at a table in a town restaurant.

March 11

Two Iraqi civilian employees killed in Basra. (Reuters)

Two Iraqi women working for contractors employed by the U.S.-led forces occupying Iraq were killed as they were returning to their homes in Basra, a military official said.

The killings come a day after gunmen posing as Iraqi policemen killed two U.S. civilians and their translator on a road south of Baghdad.

Cleric hurt in alleged assassination attempt in Baghdad (AP)

A Sunni Muslim cleric was wounded in what he claimed was an assassination attempt against him that killed his son and son-in-law. Nazem Khalaf, a cleric at the Rahman mosque in Abu Dsheer, a suburb in southwestern Baghdad, said that assailants drove up next to his car and opened fire. He was wounded in the head and hand, and his 21-year-old-son and 37-year-old son-in-law were killed. "Whoever tried to kill me is trying to ignite sectarian violence," said Khalaf, who claimed that three days before the attack, a member from a Shiite Muslim militant group threatened to kill him if he didn't stop going to the mosque. He said he was accused of belonging to the Wahhabis, an Islamic sect whose adherents are mainly in Saudi Arabia.

Three Iraqis killed in separate attacks. (Chinese Xinhua News Agency)

Three Iraqis, including two policemen, were killed in separate attacks. One Iraqi was killed and two others were seriously injured in an explosion of a roadside bomb targeting an American military convoy passing through Fallujah.

In another attack, two Iraqi policemen were killed near the city of Samara when unidentified attackers in a civilian car shot at their car, the channel reported.

March 13

Baghdad students protest against interim constitution. (Al-Jazeera satellite TV)

Students of Baghdad University have described the interim Iraqi State Administration Law as a "new form of dictatorship". In a demonstration they organized on campus, the students urged the Iraqi people and its political forces to demonstrate unity, reject the principle of federal division, and oppose the US occupation. The demonstration followed a one-day strike by the students in response to an appeal by Ayatollah Shaykh Muhammad al-Ya'qubi [Al-Najaf-based Shi'i cleric], who opposes the new Interim Basic Law.

Bomb in Baghdad kills Iraq official's brother-in-law. (AP)

A brother-in-law of a member of the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council was killed when a bomb exploded in a shop. Iraqi police confirmed that one man was killed and another was wounded in the explosion. An aide to Ibrahim al-Jaafari, a Shiite council member, identified the slain victim as Haidar al-Qazwini and said he was al-Jaafari's brother-in-law. Al-Jaafari is the main spokesman for the Islamic Dawa Party, which was once based in Iran.

Mosul religious establishments ban attacks on police, state facilities. (London-based newspaper *Al-Zaman*)

Eight religious establishments in Mosul, representing religious scholars in the cities, have banned attacks on the police and on state institutions. These establishments are the Muslim Ulema Commission, the Ulema League, Ahl al-Hadith Society in Mosul, Udaba al-Islam Society, the Kurdistan Ulema Association-Mosul Branch, the Kurdistan Islamic Union-Mosul Branch, the Iraqi Islamic Party and the Muslim Youth

Society. Representatives of the eight establishments issued a statement at the end of a meeting they held. The statement included a host of recommendations; namely that every person has the right to aspire to life in peace and security, especially in a country like Iraq, which has all the requirements for achieving this aspiration. The statement said that it is the duty of every Iraqi to take part in rebuilding the administrative institutions of the state. It added that from a religious standpoint, it is prohibited to attack state establishments and the Iraqi police and to kill citizens under whatever pretext, in light of the absence of security in the country, as happened in Baghdad, Mosul, Arbil and Karbala.

March 14

Iraqi Kurdish official killed in Mosul. (Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party newspaper *Khabat*)

The director-general of the Kurdistan Democratic Party-led regional government's Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and the official in charge of coordination, Mu'tasam Abd-al-Rahman, along with a delegation from the Social Affairs Ministry in Baghdad and the Social Affairs Department of the Coalition Provisional Authority, the CPA, were attacked by an armed group in Mosul. The delegation's visit, which set out from Arbil to Mosul, was aimed at coordinating the work of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs of the Kurdistan region and the Iraqi government's and the Coalition Provisional Authority, the CPA. As a result of the attack, the director-general of the Health Ministry, Mu'tasam Abd-al-Rahman, was killed and his driver was injured.

Iraqi Turkoman leader escapes assassination attempt. (Iraqi Turkoman Front newspaper *Turkomaneli*)

Unidentified people reportedly planted an explosive device on the route taken by the convoy of Iraqi Turkoman Front leader Dr Faruq Abdallah Abd-al-Rahman in Al-Khalis area while he was returning to Kirkuk from Baghdad. He escaped injury but two of his bodyguards were slightly injured.

March 15

City Council politician killed in Kirkuk. (AP)

Gunmen killed a member of the city council and a bodyguard in Kirkuk, Iraqi police said. The Shiite councilor, Aggar Al-Taweel, was shot several times in the head as he drove to the weekly meeting of the city council, said police chief Torhan Yussif. The gunmen fired from a red car and fled. Al-Taweel, who founded an Arab political party that later splintered, was known for frank opinions and he was often outspoken in council debates.

Four aid workers killed in Mosul. (*Los Angeles Times*)

Four American missionary workers were shot to death and another was wounded evening in the city of Mosul, where they were researching needs for humanitarian projects. It was the second attack on American civilians in less than a week and the

second instance of American missionaries being killed in Iraq. The missionaries in Mosul were working under the auspices of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board.

March 16

Translator for the US army shot dead in Mosul. (AFP)

Gunmen killed a female Iraqi translator for the US army in Mosul, police said, raising the death toll to five in the northern Iraqi city in a 24-hour period. "Assailants drove up alongside her car and fired Kalashnikovs, hitting her in the head and shoulder," said the police.

Two German engineers killed near Karbala. (German news agency DDP)

Two German hydraulic engineers were apparently killed in Iraq. Two Germans were taken to a hospital and laid out in the morgue there. It was reported that the men were in a car together with two Iraqi companions, when they were shot at by unknown persons near Karbala. The two Iraqis were also killed.

Iraqi killed, five wounded in apparent rocket attack on Baghdad neighborhood. (AFP)

An apparent rocket attack killed an Iraqi civilian and wounded five others as Shiite Muslims were leaving a mosque in central Baghdad at night. Several Shiite men had just exited their mosque in the rundown Karkh neighborhood when a rocket exploded, reportedly claiming the life of one 60-year-old man and wounding five other people, including a young girl. An angry crowd of Iraqis gathered in the street of small shops, a mosque and shabby-looking houses, where the blast hit, to shout abuse at a patrol of US soldiers who were trying to secure the scene.

Unidentified gunmen kill Baghdad university professor. (Al-Jazeera satellite TV)

Unidentified gunmen assassinated Dr Marwan al-Hiti, professor of chemical engineering in Baghdad University, as he was returning to his home in Al-Khadra Neighbourhood in Baghdad. Al-Hiti had received death threats from unknown people.

March 17

Car bomb destroys five-story hotel in central Baghdad; at least 27 dead, 41 wounded. (AP)

A powerful car bomb destroyed a five-story hotel housing foreigners in central Baghdad, killing 27 people and leaving a jagged crater just days before the anniversary of the start of the Iraq war. The bomb, containing an estimated 1,000 pounds of explosives, also wounded 41 people at the Mount Lebanon Hotel. Americans, Britons, Egyptians as well as other foreigners were staying at the hotel. Many casualties were in adjacent buildings.

March 17

Three Iraq journalists killed in drive-by shooting in Baqouba. (AP)

Gunmen reportedly shot and killed three Iraqi journalists and wounded nine other employees of a coalition-funded television station in northeastern Iraq. The attack in the city of Baqouba occurred when attackers in a car opened fire on a minibus that the journalists were riding in, said Sanaa al-Daghistani, information director of Diyala TV. All the victims were employees of Diyala. The slain victims are as Mohammed Farhan, Majeed Rashid and Nadia Shawkat.

At least four killed by blast in Basra. (Chinese Xinhua News Agency)

At least four people were reportedly killed by a large blast that shook the Mirbad Hotel in the centre of Basra. A car bomb exploded as a British military patrol passed by in Basra, killing at least four people and injuring at least two people, including a child.

March 21

Up to two Iraqis killed, several injured in Baghdad rocket attack. (AFP)

Up to two Iraqis were killed and several people wounded when three rockets exploded in Baghdad. One hit a traffic circle near the Mansour neighbourhood close to the line of the heavily guarded US compound, a second hit nearby and a third landed in Freedom Rest, a rest and recreation location for the 1st Armoured Division. It was reported that two Iraqis were killed and five injured. It was also reported that an explosion on a crossroad of the former Baghdad International Fair in the Mansour neighborhood killed one Iraqi and injured 12.

Iraqi police arrest Ansar al-Islam member in Kirkuk. (Voice of the Mujahidin)

Iraqi police in Kirkuk announced that they arrested a member of Ansar al-Islam group in northern Iraq. The police later handed over the arrested member to the US occupation forces.

March 23

Two Iraqi police killed in drive-by shooting. (AFP)

Gunmen reportedly killed two Iraqi policemen and wounded two others in a drive-by shooting in Kirkuk. Ali Kazem, 26, and his 23-year-old brother were shot dead at a checkpoint in the center of the city and two colleagues were seriously wounded.

Eight Iraqi police cadets, two civilians shot dead south of Baghdad. (AFP)

It was reported that eight police cadets and two civilians were killed and two more people wounded in a drive-by shooting in Mahawil, Baghdad. Eight students heading for morning classes at the police academy in the main nearby town of Hilla were killed, along with the driver and a university student.

March 24

Iraqi family dies in roadside bomb blast in Baghdad. (AFP)

An Iraqi mother and father and their eight-year-old daughter were killed when their minibus was hit by a roadside bomb in Baghdad. The device reportedly blew up as the

bus, which had several other people aboard, was travelling through the southeast suburb of Salmanpak.

Iraqi police chief killed near Baghdad. (AFP).

Gunmen shot to death the police chief of a village south of Baghdad. It was reported that unidentified assailants opened fire at Lieutenant Colonel Yassin Khodr al-Janabi, the police chief of Jorf as-Sakher village, killing him instantly.

March 25

Four Iraqis killed in US operation. (AFP)

It was reported that four Iraqis were killed, including a two-year-old child, and four children wounded during a US operation in the central Iraqi village of Gazwan overnight.

Physician kidnapped in Baghdad. (Xinhua News Agency)

A physician specialized in kidney surgery was kidnapped by some unidentified men in front of his hospital in Al Maghrib street in central Baghdad. Dr. Waleed Al Khayal, the physician, was reportedly kidnapped by armed men while leaving the hospital for home in Hay Al Askary in Kadhimiya district in Baghdad. The owner of the famous restaurant "Al Awail" was also kidnapped in the same respect, and the kidnapers demanded a big ransom. Businessmen and famous physicians were kidnapped in the past few months, and were released when the kidnapers receive the ransom money, which amounts to a quarter of a million dollars sometimes.

March 27

15 Iraqis killed in firefight in Fallujah. (US newspaper *The Washington Post*)

An early morning search operation by U.S. Marines erupted into an intermittent, day-long firefight against Iraqi insurgents, the heaviest fighting since the Marines replaced Army troops this week as the occupation force in this restive town. Iraqi medical workers said 15 Iraqis were killed in the fighting; other sources put the Iraqi death toll at five to seven. The dead also included a boy of 12 and a woman. Five more children were among the wounded, doctors said.

Four Iraqis killed, 19 wounded in Mosul rocket attack. (AFP)

Four Iraqis, including a 13-year-old girl, were killed and 19 wounded in a Katyusha rocket attack on the provincial governor's office in Mosul.

Iraqi policeman, two gunmen killed in Mosul bank shootout. (AFP)

It was reported that an Iraqi police officer was killed and another wounded in a shootout at a bank in Mosul in which two gunmen were also killed. The police had been drawing their salaries from a branch of the Al-Rashid Bank in the southern Al-Ghizlani district of the city when they came under fire.

Iraqi police colonel shot dead in Kirkuk. (AFP)

An Iraqi police colonel has been shot dead by unknown gunmen in Kirkuk. Gunmen reportedly fired assault-rifles at police Colonel Romeo Slewa Badwari as he was stepping out of his house in al-Nasr" neighborhood in central Kirkuk. Badwari was responsible for the office which granted weapons licences.

March 28

Five Iraqis wounded in bomb blast near school in Baquba. (AFP)

A roadside bomb exploded near a school outside Baquba, wounding five Iraqi civilians, two of them children. The bomb was reportedly planted 100 meters away from a school in the village of Bohrez. It exploded in the Salam neighborhood, injuring five Iraqi civilians including a 10-year-old boy and an eight-year-old girl, some 30 minutes before school was due to start.

Three Iraqi civilians hurt in Kirkuk bomb blast. (AFP)

Three Iraqi civilians were injured when a bomb concealed in a police sentry box exploded in the center of Kirkuk during morning rushhour.

Police chief escapes assassination bid, nine others wounded in Mosul. (AFP)

A police chief escaped an assassination bid that left four policemen wounded near Mosul where five members of one family were wounded in a separate incident. The alleged assassination attempt targeted Major General Mohammed Khairi al-Barhawi, the police chief of Nineveh governorate. A gunbattle reportedly broke out between his bodyguards and the attackers, and there were casualties on both sides. Police also said that four mortar rounds apparently targeting a police station in the al-Rashidiyeh neighborhood in the north of Mosul, fell short of their target and landed in and around a civilian house.

Foreign civilians killed in Mosul attack. (UK newspaper *Financial Times*)

A British and a Canadian civilian were killed in a drive-by shooting in Mosul in a widening campaign targeting western contractors in Iraq. Coalition officials said the two men were guards working for the London-based company, Olive Security, and were escorting a convoy of engineers from General Electric, rehabilitating a power station in the city.

March 29

Shiite newspaper shut. (*The Washington Post*)

In Baghdad, U.S. troops closed a newspaper, charging the Shiite Muslim weekly with "intent to disrupt general security and incite violence" against occupation forces. The newspaper is controlled by Moqtada Sadr. Hours after U.S. military officers shut down the newspaper, minibuses had ferried in enough protesters to fill the square opposite its padlocked offices.

March 30

One killed, six injured in suicide bombing in Al-Hillah. (Iraqi Patriotic Union of Kurdistan satellite TV)

It was reported that a suicide bomber blew himself up inside a car he was driving towards a police station in a suburb of Hilla. The action resulted in the killing of the perpetrator and the injury of six people, three police officers and three civilians.

Five hurt as jobless Iraqis clash with police in Najaf (AFP).

Five people were injured in clashes pitting hundreds of jobless people against Iraqi policemen and Spanish soldiers serving in the US-led coalition in the central city of Najaf. A statement from the Spanish forces confirmed the incident but said only "two demonstrators were slightly wounded by the crowd," while adding that the Iraqi police detained 32 people. Police arrested 30 demonstrators who were armed with Kalashnikov assault rifles, said General Ibrahim Mohammed, head of the police station in central Najaf.

March 31

Ten people hurt in car bomb explosion in Baquba. (AFP)

Four policemen and six civilians were reportedly injured when a car bomb exploded in Baquba. Police said that four policemen and six pedestrians were wounded in the attack. The explosion was reportedly the result of a car bomb.

Governor of Diyala survives attempt on his life. (Iraqi Patriotic Union of Kurdistan satellite TV)

Police in Ba'qubah have said the governor of Diyala, Abdallah al-Juburi, survived an attack. It was reported that a suicide bomber blew him self up in his vehicle near the convoy of the governor of Diyala, Abdallah al-Juburi. As a result and six others injured, three of whom were Al-Juburi's bodyguards and the other three were civilians.

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