

COI Focus

Iraq Security Situation in South Iraq

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Cedoca

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All the sources used are briefly mentioned in a footnote and described in detail in a bibliography at the end of the document. Sources which have been consulted but which were not used are listed as consulted sources. In exceptional cases, sources are not mentioned by name. When specific information from this document is used, the user is asked to quote the source mentioned in the bibliography.

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1. Introduction

The aim of this COI Focus is to present the current security situation in south Iraq, i.e. the region comprising the provinces of Babil, Kerbala, Basra, Najaf, Wassit, Qadisiya, Thi Qar, Missan and al-Muthanna. The nature, the extent, the intensity and the localisation of the violence will be examined. Special attention will go to the extent to which Iraqi civilians are affected by the violence.

This analysis intends to present an overall picture of the violence in South Iraq and is not a comprehensive survey of the security incidents in the region. Those incidents that are mentioned mainly serve to illustrate general trends in the region under consideration.

This COI Focus is based on public sources, articles and analyses on the current security situation in Iraq. It is meant to support the assessment of asylum applications and can be used as an aid to assess the credibility of the applicants' statements.

Cedoca closely monitors the security situation in Iraq. Future developments and incidents that are relevant for the pattern of violence described will be included in the scheduled update. In case of a fundamental change in the pattern of violence, an update will be published sooner.

The previous update – which covered central Iraq as well - was released on 25 July 2014. The reporting period is 19 March 2003 – 10 May 2015.

Research for this COI Focus was carried out in April and May 2015.

The spelling of proper nouns (personal and place names, names of armed groups and political parties) follows the spelling most commonly found in English language sources.

2. Current situation

In the years following the invasion of Iraq by the US-led coalition on 19 March 2003, the security situation has deteriorated dramatically. The absence of a workable reconstruction plan and the destructive action of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQ-I) and Shi'a militias sparked an ethnic and sectarian conflict amounting to civil war in 2006-2007.¹ From 2008 onwards, with the increase in American troops, who obtained the active collaboration of Sunni tribes against AQ-I and acted vigorously against the Shi'a militias, there was a sharp decrease in the violence but in the absence of any reconciliation process, the sectarian and ethnic divides remained. In central and south Iraq, a low-level conflict² persisted from 2009 until 2012, characterized by politically motivated assassinations and sporadic terrorist attacks.

After the departure of the American Forces in December 2011, the Shi'a Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, steadily consolidated his grip on power.³ By manoeuvring his Sunni coalition partners out of power and reinforcing direct control on the provinces, he antagonized the Sunni minority.⁴ By the end of 2012, anti-government protests were held in Anbar, Salah al-Din, Nineveh and Diyala provinces. Likewise, in Baghdad Sunnis took to the streets to denounce their political and social marginalisation.⁵ On 23 April 2013, the army intervened against a demonstration in Hawiya, killing some 40 participants. The violence escalated in the following months. This led to a resurgence of al-Qaeda in Iraq, under the names Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Islamic State (IS)⁶, which committed frequent large scale coordinated attacks against Shi'a targets.⁷ Since the spring of 2013, the escalating violence has further undermined the already shaky security situation.⁸

At the end of December 2013, the Iraqi army razed a protest camp in Ramadi and arrested opposition leader Ahmed al-Alwani. In order to de-escalate the situation, the army then withdrew from the main towns in Anbar Province. The ensuing power vacuum was used by ISIL to take control of parts of Fallujah and Ramadi. They soon left Ramadi but Fallujah remained under control of ISIL and local tribal militias.⁹

On 10 June 2014, the Iraqi army and security forces were chased from the town of Mosul by militants from ISIL, aided by members of the Jaysh Riyal al Tariq al-Naqshbandi (JRTN)¹⁰, after a five-day military offensive.¹¹ ISIL then pursued its offensive in the provinces of Nineveh, Salah al-Din, Diyala, Anbar and Kirkuk.¹² Fighting was also reported in Baghdad and Babil provinces.¹³ The successive defeats suffered by the Iraqi Armed Forces led to a mobilisation of the Shi'a militias in Baghdad and in the south to stop the advance of ISIL.¹⁴ Iraqi troops also received assistance from

¹ The New York Times, 03/12/2006, [url](#); International Crisis Group, 07/02/2008, [url](#)

² UNHCR, 31/05/2012, [url](#)

³ Congressional Research Service, 22/08/2013, [url](#).

⁴ International Crisis Group, 14/08/2013, [url](#)

⁵ United Nations Security Council, 12/03/2013, [url](#); The New York Times, 02/01/2013, [url](#)

⁶ In order to avoid possible confusions, the abbreviation ISIL will be used in this document.

⁷ Congressional Research Service (CRS), 03/06/2013, [url](#)

⁸ UNHCR, 31/05/2012, [url](#)

⁹ Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 27/05/2014, [url](#)

¹⁰ Jaysh Riyal al Tariq al-Naqshbandi (JRTN) was created in 2006 as a reaction against the execution of Saddam Hussein. Inspired by Sufi teachings, it includes former Baathists and explicitly fights Shi'a dominance in Iraq. Its leader was Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, a former top army officer and Vice-President under Saddam Hussein.

¹¹ The New York Times, 10/06/2014, [url](#)

¹² The New York Times, 11/06/2014, [url](#)

¹³ The Guardian, 12/06/2014, [url](#)

¹⁴ CRS - Congressional Research Service, 12/11/2014, [url](#)

US advisors¹⁵ and Iranian troops.¹⁶ With the escalation of violence in central Iraq, the number of IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) in Iraq increased to 2 million.¹⁷

The proclamation of an Islamic State in the form of a caliphate under Abu Bakr Baghdadi¹⁸ shows that ISIL has the ambition to exercise permanent control over the territory it conquered. During the second half of 2014, ISIL proved strong enough to keep almost all the areas it conquered in the provinces of Nineveh, Salah al-Din, Diyala, Anbar and Kirkuk. The army, with the aid of Shi'a militias and foreign military support, managed to keep control over Baghdad and the south.¹⁹

Under the terror regime established by ISIL in the areas it controls, religious and ethnic minorities suffer heavily.²⁰ Persecution of Yazidis around Sinjar prompted the US to mobilize an international coalition aiming to stop ISIL advance by means of aerial attacks in Iraq and Syria.²¹ In addition to the regime of terror and the US-led coalition's aerial bombardments, the civilian population suffers from water shortages and a lack of medicine.²² In the capital Baghdad, the security situation is marked by repeated terrorist attacks and the reappearance of Shi'a militias in the streets. There were also some direct confrontations between ISIL militants and Iraqi forces west of Baghdad and in the north of Babil. No such confrontations have been reported in the southern provinces, where security incidents take the form of sporadic terror attacks with a limited number of civilian casualties.²³ Due to the escalation of violence, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) considers that the situation in Iraq corresponds since July 2014 to an internal armed conflict.²⁴

On 8 September 2014, the Iraqi parliament approved a new government led by Haider al-Abadi, from the Dawa Party, replacing Nouri al-Maliki who had been Prime Minister since 2006.²⁵ Haider al-Abadi has declared several times that the interests of the Sunni minority will be better protected under his new policy.²⁶

During the following months, the conflict gradually became a war on two fronts: to the north and north-east of Baghdad, ISIL was pushed back by Iraqi troops with the help of Kurdish Peshmerga fighters and Shi'a militias, whereas along the Euphrates, ISIL managed to keep, or even improve, its positions.²⁷

¹⁵ BBC News, 20/06/2014, [url](#)

¹⁶ Jamestown Foundation, 10/07/2014, [url](#); BBC News, 17/06/2014, [url](#)

¹⁷ UNHCR - UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 30/12/2014, [url](#)

¹⁸ BBC News, 30/06/2014, [url](#)

¹⁹ Institute for the Study of War, 07/01/2015, [url](#)

²⁰ UNHCR - UN High Commissioner for Refugees, October 2014, [url](#)

²¹ The Guardian, 16/09/2014, [url](#)

²² Agence France-Presse, 1/12/2014, [url](#)

²³ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 19/09/2014, [url](#)

²⁴ United Nations Assistance Mission Iraq, 18/07/2014, [url](#)

²⁵ The New York Times, 08/09/2013, [url](#)

²⁶ The New York Times, 15/12/2014, [url](#)

²⁷ The Telegraph, 18/04/2015, [url](#)

3. Nature of the violence

3.1. Fight for territorial control

The taking of Falluja in December 2013²⁸ showed that ISIL intended to gain territorial control over areas in Iraq, after its conquest of the Syrian provinces of Raqqa, Hasaka and Deir ez-Zor. This was confirmed by its June 2014 offensive in Central Iraq. On 10 June 2014, the Iraqi army and security forces were chased from the town of Mosul by ISIL, aided by the Jayish Riyal al Tariq al-Naqshabandi (JRTN), after a five-day military offensive.²⁹ In the following weeks and months, ISIL continued its offensive southwards and conquered important towns in the provinces of Anbar, Diyala, Salah al-Din, Diyala and Kirkuk.³⁰ Fighting was also reported near Baghdad, in Zaidan and Abu Ghraib³¹, but the capital remained under government control. The Kurdish regional Government's Peshmergas took control of Kirkuk, Tuz Khurmatu, Mansuriyah and other towns.³² The inability of the Iraqi army to counter the ISIL advance led to the reactivation of Shi'a militias, who were deployed to protect Shi'a shrines and the Shi'a population in central Iraq.³³

The proclamation of an Islamic State in the form of a caliphate under Abu Bakr Baghdadi³⁴ shows that ISIL has the ambition to exercise permanent control over the territory it conquered. The fighting for territorial gains transformed the central provinces of Anbar, Nineveh, Diyala and Salah al-Din into war zones. This territorial strife also led to armed confrontations between Iraqi forces and ISIL militants in the west of Kirkuk Province and the north of Babil Province.³⁵

With the exception of the north of Babil province, the southern provinces were not directly affected by the fight for territorial control and during the reporting period they did not see any fighting between ISIL militants and Iraqi government troops. Except in Babil, no ISIL military forces capable of military operations are present in these provinces, where ISIL does not seem to be pursuing territorial gains.

The following BBC map shows the regions where ISIL is active and the regions it controlled as of April 2015.³⁶

²⁸ International Crisis Group, 28/04/2014, [url](#)

²⁹ The New York Times, 10/06/2014, [url](#)

³⁰ Institute for the Study of War, 11/06/2014, [url](#)

³¹ Institute for the Study of War, 13/06/2014, [url](#)

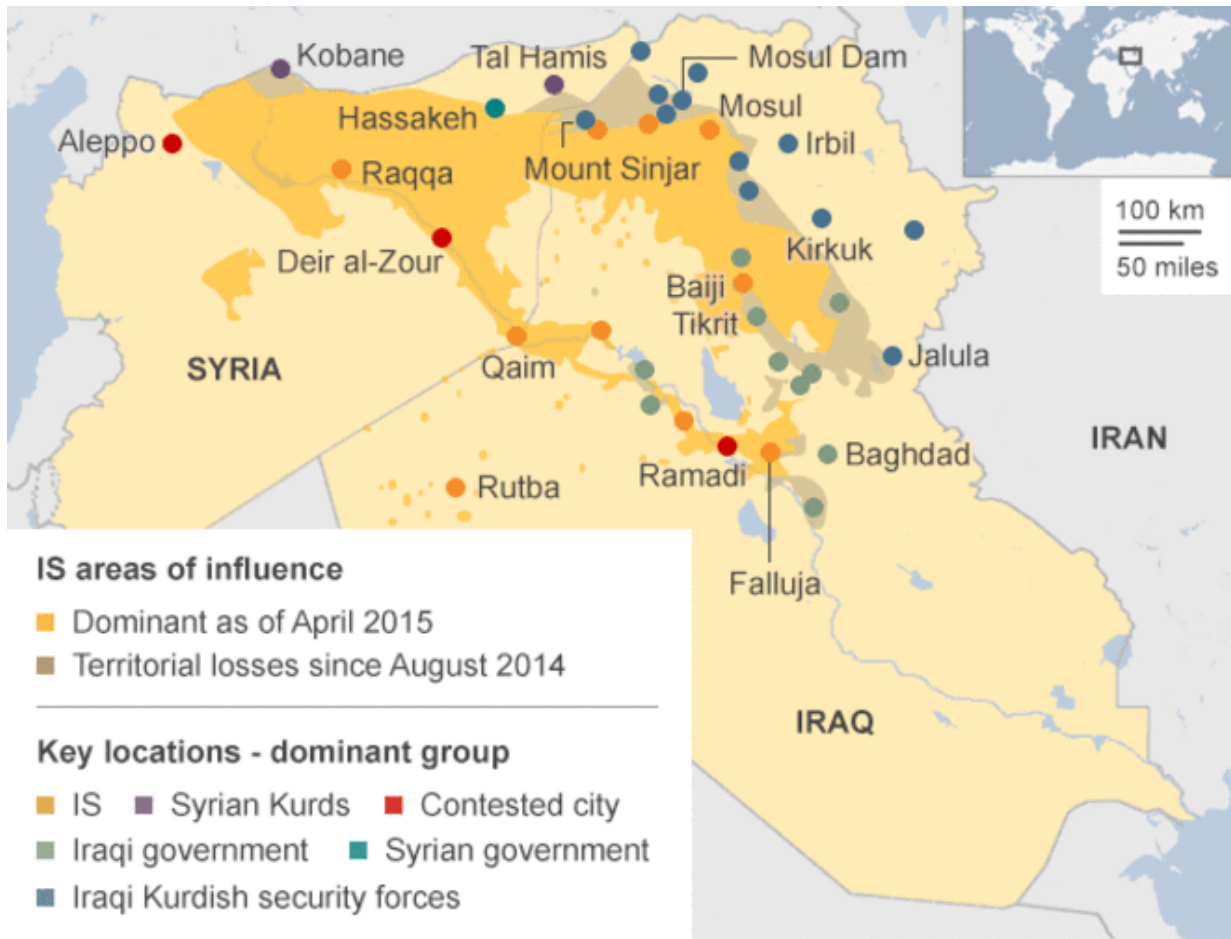
³² Institute for the Study of War, 21/06/2014, [url](#)

³³ The New York Times, 21/06/2014, [url](#)

³⁴ BBC News, 30/06/2014, [url](#)

³⁵ Institute for the Study of War, 09/07/2014, [url](#)

³⁶ BBC News, 26/05/2015, [url](#)



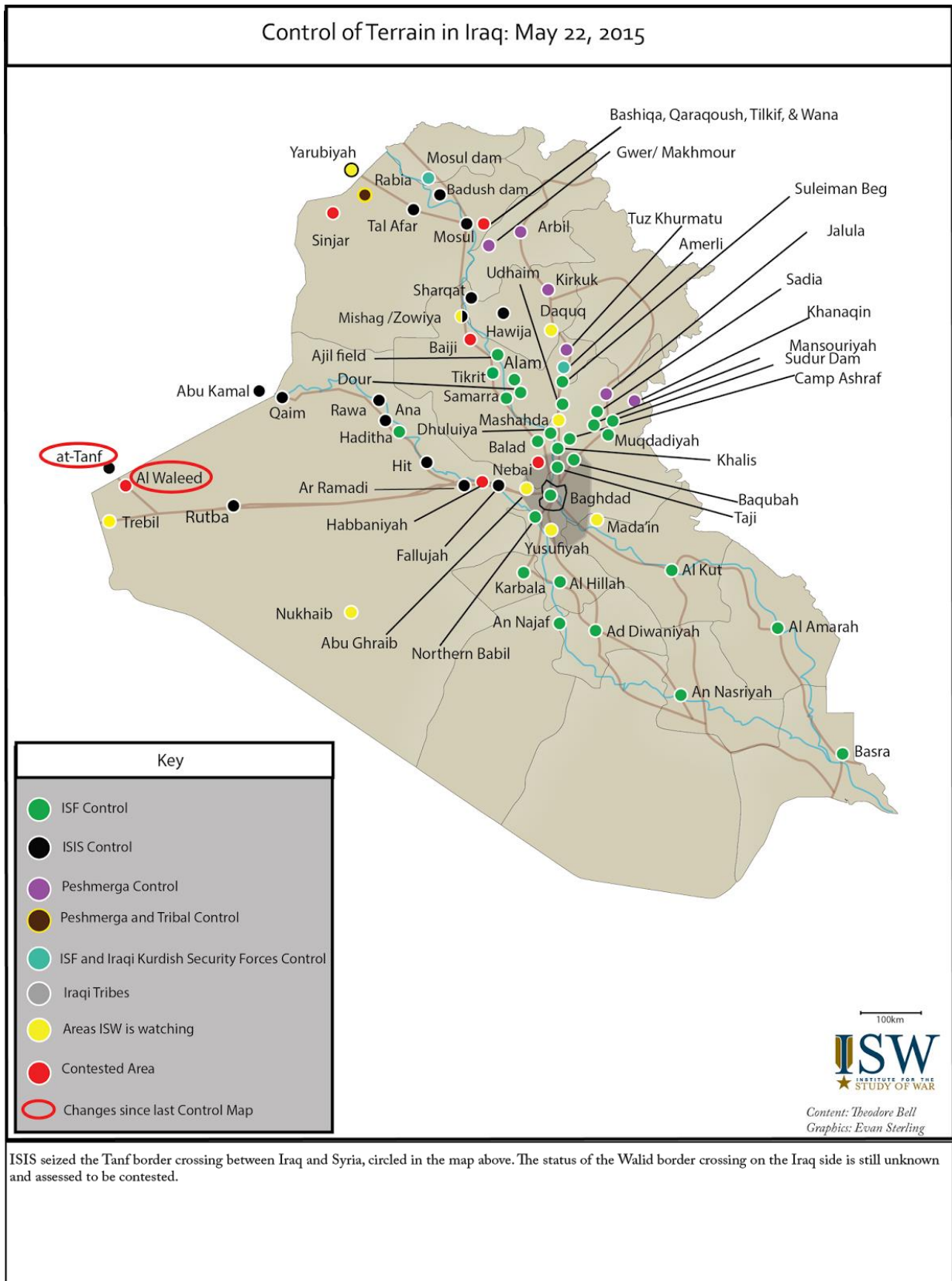
Source: US Department of Defense. Tikrit was retaken from IS in April 2015



The following map from the Institute for the Study of War shows which forces controlled the main towns as of 22 May 2015. ISIL controlled important towns in Anbar and Nineveh provinces. The organisation was only the only authority present in Mosul and Fallujah, as well as in Tal Afar, Hawija and Hit. By the end of May, the towns of Habbaniyah, Sinjar, Baiji and Al Waleed were still contested. According to the map, Ramadi is controlled by ISIL forces but the fighting was still going on in and around the town³⁷. Makhmour, Kirkuk, Amerli, Jalula and Mansouriyah were under Peshmerga control. Samarra, Suleiman Beg, Baquba, Taji, Tikrit and Baghdad were controlled by the Iraqi central government, as well as cities and towns in the mainly Shi'a southern provinces, such as Najaf, Kerbala, Hilla, Nasiriya and Basra.³⁸

³⁷ BBC News, 26/05/2015, [url](#)

³⁸ Institute for the Study of War, 22/05/2015, [url](#)



Source: Institute for the Study of War

3.2. Large-scale terror attacks

ISIL's strategy also includes large-scale terror attacks aimed at making as many arbitrary victims as possible. In 2006, the bombing of the al-Askari Shi'a shrine in Samarra led to a wave of sectarian violence.³⁹ In 2006 and 2007, IEDs caused heavy casualties among the civilian population. From 2008 until 2012, there was a significant decrease in civilian casualties.⁴⁰

Since early 2013, the frequency of large-scale coordinated bomb attacks has been increasing again. These attacks target public areas, especially those frequented by Shi'ites.⁴¹ Responsibility for these attacks is generally claimed by, or attributed to, ISIL and its allies. By targeting Shi'a civilians, they try to exacerbate sectarian and ethnic tensions in an attempt to recreate the conditions that led to the wide-spread violence following the al-Askari bombing in February 2006.⁴²

An analysis of the available information shows that in 2014-2015 such large-scale bomb attacks were mainly committed in Baghdad. The capital's Shi'a neighbourhoods have been the main target of ISIL's terror campaign since the spring of 2013.⁴³ These attacks also clearly show that ISIL has the capacity to strike the Iraqi regime in its centre of power. In the south, similar attacks are committed more sporadically. These 'spectator attacks'⁴⁴ are not only meant to cause a maximum of civilian casualties but also to show the powerlessness of the Shi'a rulers in Baghdad and to make the headlines and shock public opinion. Large-scale bombings are mainly affecting provinces/urban districts with a predominantly Shi'a population and are less frequent in areas with a Sunni majority. If ISIL were to use large-scale arbitrary violence in Sunni provinces/urban districts, it risks alienating itself from some segments of the Sunni community. Violent incidents that do occur in Sunni areas are therefore less arbitrary and more targeted than in Shi'a areas.

Large-scale bombings also occur in the south, but their number remains low. They are also intended to trigger widespread sectarian violence.⁴⁵ At the same time, they force the central government to enhance security measures in the south and to divert troops from central Iraq's battle fronts.

As ISIL intensified its ground offensive in central Iraq in the summer of 2014, the number of large-scale bombings decreased.⁴⁶ This is not only the result of a change of strategy, ISIL's main aim now being territorial conquest and control, but also of the concentration of Iraqi forces in Baghdad in order to reinforce security. Nevertheless, terrorist bombings are still part of ISIL's strategy and the organisation has still the capacity to commit such bombings. This is one of the reasons for the deployment of troops in Karbala and Najaf⁴⁷, where attacks on Shi'a shrines are feared.

During the first months of 2015, there were no coordinated large-scale terror attacks in South Iraq.⁴⁸

³⁹ Center for Strategic and International Studies, 22/08/2013, [url](#)

⁴⁰ Iraq Body Count, 21/01/2015, [url](#)

⁴¹ The New York Times, 17/08/2013, [url](#)

⁴² Center for Strategic and International Studies, 22/08/2013, [url](#)

⁴³ Institute for the Study of War, September 2013, [url](#)

⁴⁴ Institute for the Study of War, 21/06/2013, [url](#)

⁴⁵ Center for Strategic and International studies, 24/10/2012, [url](#)

⁴⁶ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 19/09/2014, [url](#)

⁴⁷ Institute for the Study of War, 12/06/2014, [url](#)

⁴⁸ See point 5. Geographic distribution of the violence.

3.3. Sectarian violence

Most violent incidents in Iraq are of a sectarian nature and are part of the larger Sunni-Shi'a rivalry in the region. The presence of the coalition troops did not prevent the civil war of 2006-2007, which was mainly a consequence of the shift of power from the Sunni minority to the Shi'a majority.⁴⁹ The numerous attacks on Shi'a targets aim to destabilize the central authorities and to contest the political predominance of the Shi'ites by causing widespread sectarian violence.⁵⁰ ISIL launched its ground offensive in central Iraq in June 2014 with the avowed aim of removing this region from the control of the central authorities, predominantly Shi'a.

The sectarian divide in Iraq is progressively leading to social segregation and transforming provinces with a mixed population into conflict zones. During ISIL's ground offensive in central Iraq, Shi'a civilians⁵¹ and Shi'a military personnel⁵² were explicitly targeted, giving rise to many human rights violations.⁵³ Shi'a shrines in central Iraq are also targeted by ISIL.⁵⁴ On the other hand, human rights violations and summary executions of Sunni prisoners by the central authorities have also been reported.⁵⁵ The reactivated Shi'a militias are also guilty of numerous human rights violations against the Sunni minority in Baghdad and elsewhere.⁵⁶

In the south, the Sunni minority is less exposed. In 2013, members of the Sunni community in Basra were killed in a series of murders. Sunnis also received threats and were called upon to leave the region.⁵⁷ Elsewhere in the south, the Sunni minority has been under increased pressure. The Sunni al-Sadun tribe has been expelled from Basra, Nasiriya and Kut.⁵⁸ Between 23 June and 20 August 2014, at least 19 Sunni civilians were killed and 19 other abducted in Basra province, according to UNAMI.⁵⁹

Iraq's religious minorities are in a vulnerable position.⁶⁰ They were already a target of the violence during the 2006-2007 civil war⁶¹, when many Christians, Mandeans and Yezidis fled Iraq.⁶² In the years following the civil war, the central authorities were unable to guarantee the security of religious minorities. The authorities made some efforts to improve their security but failed to take adequate action against their attackers.⁶³ Additionally, well-to-do members of religious minorities are potentially at risk of being abducted for ransom, according to the UNHCR.⁶⁴

In the summer of 2014, thousands of Christians fled ISIL's offensive in central Iraq.⁶⁵ ISIL instructed Christians to leave Mosul before 19 July. Abductions and assassinations of Christians were reported. Their property was confiscated or destroyed.⁶⁶ In the Nineveh Plains also, Christians, Yezidis and

⁴⁹ Center for Strategic and International Studies, 09/07/2014, [url](#)

⁵⁰ Center for Strategic and International Studies, 22/08/2013, [url](#)

⁵¹ Human Rights Watch, 12/06/2014, [url](#); BBC News, 03/07/2014, [url](#); Human Rights Watch, 27/06/2014, [url](#)

⁵² The Independent, 16/06/2014, [url](#)

⁵³ UN News Service, 18/07/2014, [url](#)

⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch, 28/06/2014, [url](#)

⁵⁵ Reuters, 27/06/2014, [url](#)

⁵⁶ AI - Amnesty International, 14/10/2014, [url](#) [url](#)

⁵⁷ Al Monitor, 13/09/2013, [url](#); BBC, 06/11/2013, [url](#)

⁵⁸ Middle East Online, 19/09/2013, [url](#)

⁵⁹ United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), 20/08/2014, [url](#); United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Human Rights Office, 10/09/2014, [url](#); see also 5.1.2. Basra.

⁶⁰ US Department of State, 30/07/2012, [url](#); U.S Commission on International Religious Freedom, Annual Report 2015, 30/04/2015, [url](#)

⁶¹ Integrated Regional Information Network (Irin), 09/07/2014, [url](#)

⁶² Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, October 2011, [url](#)

⁶³ U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, 30/04/2015, [url](#)

⁶⁴ UNHCR, 31/05/2012, [url](#)

⁶⁵ Spiegel online, 26/06/2014, [url](#); The Guardian, 28/06/2014, [url](#)

⁶⁶ Human Rights Watch, 19/07/2014, [url](#)

Shabak were specifically targeted by the violence.⁶⁷ Yezidi women were systematically abducted by ISIL, to be forcibly converted and/or submitted to sexual abuse.⁶⁸

3.4. Targeted political violence

Politically motivated violence targeting politicians, government employees, civil servants and security personnel persisted after the end of the 2006-2007 civil war.⁶⁹ The police are the main targets of this kind of violence. Relatives of police officers can also be targeted. Other targets include judges, journalists, doctors, tribal leaders and members of a religious minority.⁷⁰ Targeted assassinations make use of IEDs and handguns.⁷¹ The UNHCR considers that government employees, members of the security forces, members of the Sahwa, tribal leaders, members of political parties and local employees of international organisations are at risk.⁷² The UNHCR adds that the methods used in targeted assassinations inevitably entail arbitrary violence since they also make victims among bystanders.⁷³

The extent of targeted political violence can be seen most clearly in the Iraq Body Count database, which indicates whenever possible the civilian quality of victims.⁷⁴

3.5. Criminal violence

The police and the army are mainly focussed on the prevention of terrorist attacks and Iraq's penal policy has severe shortcomings, which gives criminal organisations the opportunity to operate illegally. Political organisations and terrorist organisations may also resort to crime to finance their activities, sometimes in collaboration with criminal networks. It is therefore not always easy to differentiate between criminal and political violence.⁷⁵

⁶⁷ BBC News, 21/07/2014, [url](#)

⁶⁸ AI - Amnesty International, 23/12/2014, [url](#)

⁶⁹ NOREF, 1/10/2012, [url](#); SIGIR, 30/10/2012, [url](#)

⁷⁰ CSIS, 24/10/2012, [url](#)

⁷¹ CSIS, 24/10/2012, [url](#)

⁷² UNHCR, 31/05/2012, [url](#)

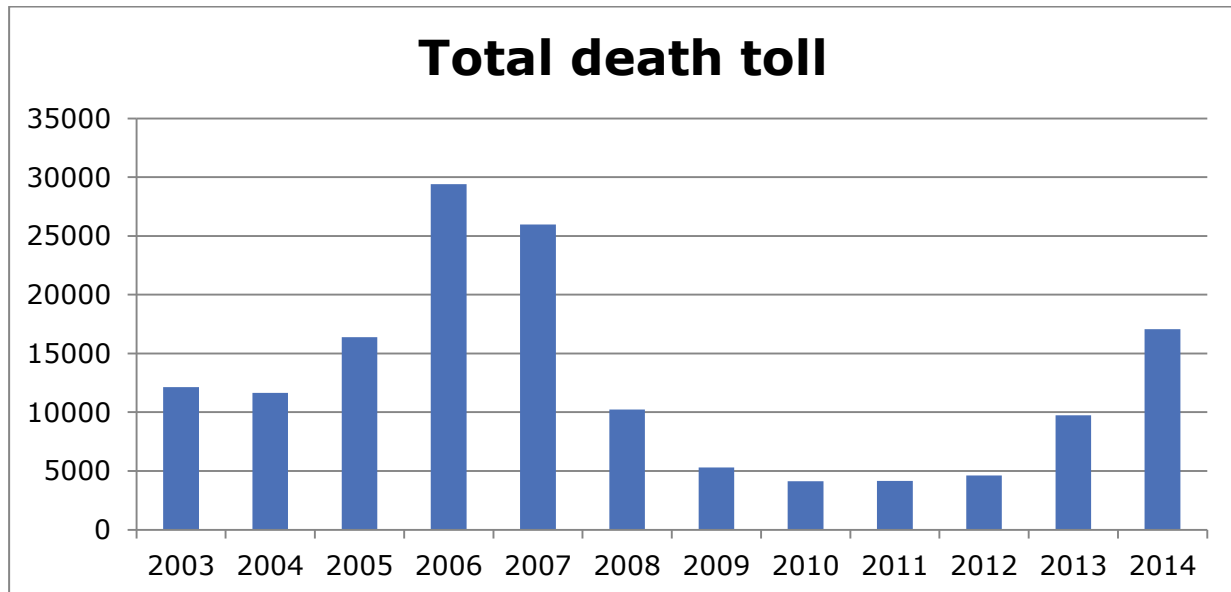
⁷³ UNAMI, May 2012, [url](#); Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 2013, [url](#)

⁷⁴ Iraq Body Count, 20/01/2015, [url](#)

⁷⁵ UNHCR, 31/05/2012, [url](#)

4. Profiles of the victims of violence

Since the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Iraq Body Count is keeping a tally of the number of civilian victims.⁷⁶ The following table gives the yearly civilian death toll between March 2003 and December 2014.⁷⁷



Source: Iraq Body Count

The figures for 2013 show that three out of four victims were male. The main targets are the police, security personnel and government employees.⁷⁸ The majority of civilian deaths registered by Iraq Body Count in 2014 were killed by one or other of the armed groups operating in Iraq. 1,748 civilians were killed in attacks by the Iraqi Air Force and 118 in aerial attacks by the international coalition.⁷⁹

The following table presents the number of civilians killed or injured between November 2012 and April 2014 according to estimates by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). From January 2014 onwards, the death toll in Anbar Province is no longer included.⁸⁰

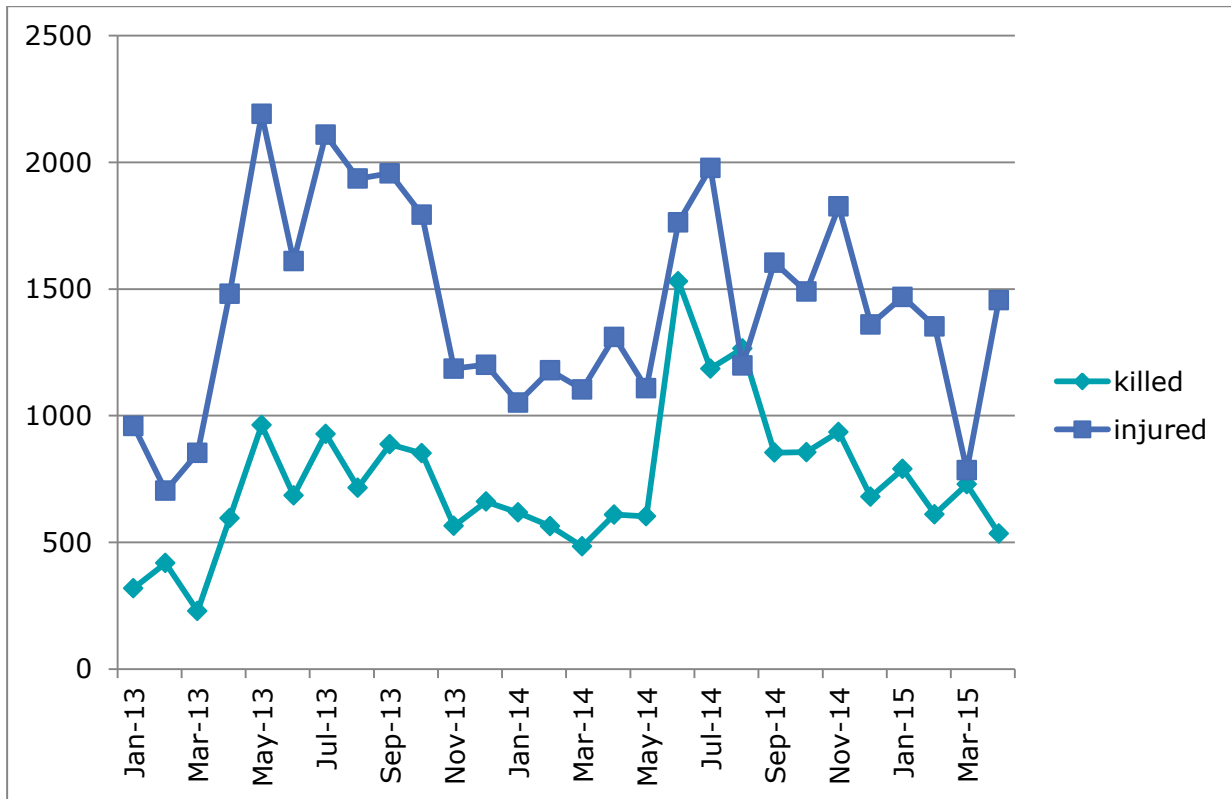
⁷⁶ Iraq Body Count (IBC) is an independent civilian initiative which has been recording in a public database the number of civilian deaths in Iraq since the US-led invasion of 2003. For many organisations and publications, such as UNHCR and the New York Times, IBC figures are an important indicator of the extent and forms taken by the violence in Iraq. It is important to note that IBC is an open-ended project, which means that the figures it presents are not definitive but constantly updated. IBC figures cited in this COI Focus are therefore indicative of the extent, the nature and the location of the violence but are not final. Casualties among the police are registered as civilian casualties. The data as from March 2014 have to be considered as preliminary and yet to be verified by the Iraq Body Count.

⁷⁷ Iraq Body Count, 25/01/2015, [url](#)

⁷⁸ Iraq Body Count, 19/03/2013, [url](#)

⁷⁹ Iraq Body Count, 01/01/2015, [url](#)

⁸⁰ United Nations Iraq, 29/05/2015, [url](#)



Source: UNIRAQ

UNAMI reported that the majority of casualties in Iraq are civilian. Out of the 9,000 deaths registered in 2013, only 1,000 belonged to the Iraqi Security Forces, the rest being civilians.⁸¹ In 2014, UNAMI registered 35,408 civilian casualties: 12,282 deaths and 23,126 injured.⁸² During 2014, the death toll among the Iraqi Security Forces increased even faster than the number of civilian casualties.⁸³

In May 2012, the UNHCR identified the following risk profiles: government employees, former members of the Iraqi Armed Forces, members of the Sahwa, tribal, religious and community leaders, members of political parties, individuals affiliated with the coalition forces, NGOs and international companies, political opponents, journalists, academics, judges, doctors and other medical professionals, Sunnis and Shi'ites in the regions where they are a minority, Shi'a pilgrims, religious minorities, members of the Shabak minority, members of the Turkmen minority, women, children and sexual minorities.⁸⁴

Since the spring of 2013, ISIL's terror campaign is mainly targeting Shi'ites, especially the Shi'a neighbourhoods in Baghdad.⁸⁵ During ISIL's summer offensive in central Iraq, Shi'a military and police were the main targets.⁸⁶ Many human rights organisations also reported acts of violence and other human rights violations against religious and ethnic minorities in the regions conquered by

⁸¹ Congressional Research Service, 02/07/2014, [url](#)

⁸² These figures include deaths and injured in Anbar province.

⁸³ United Nations Iraq, 04/01/2015, [url](#)

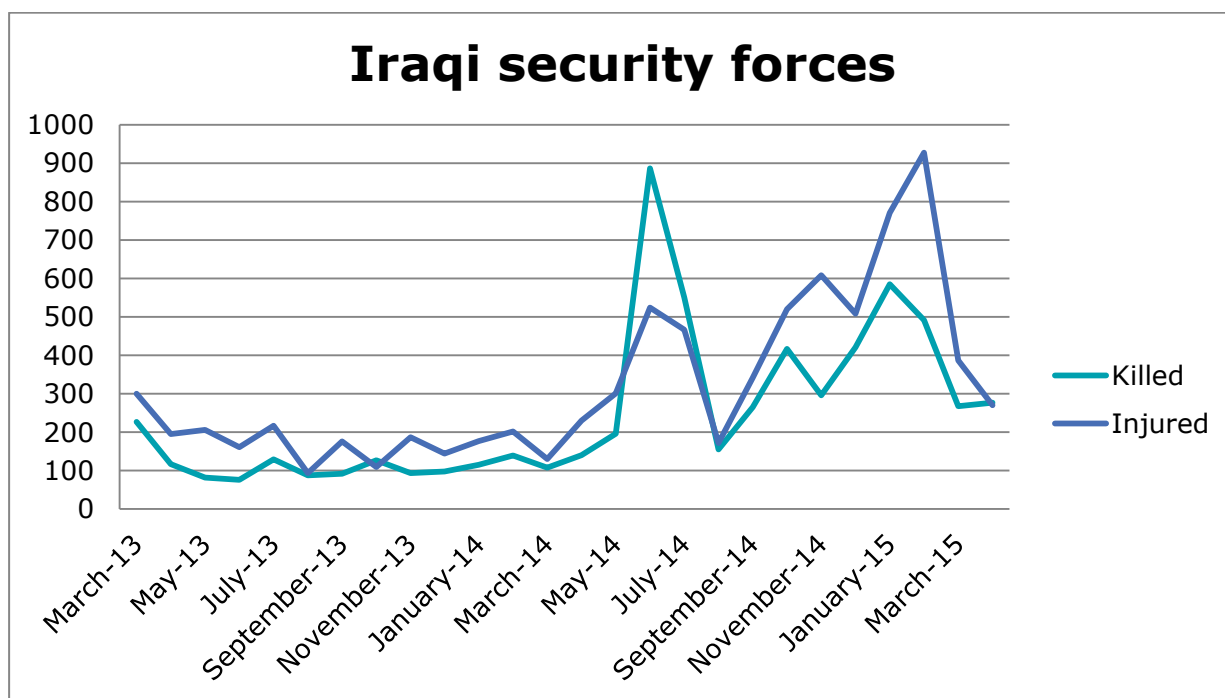
⁸⁴ UNHCR, 31/05/2012, [url](#)

⁸⁵ Institute for the Study of War, September 2013, [url](#)

⁸⁶ Human Rights Watch, 12/06/2014, [url](#); BBC News, 03/07/2014, [url](#); Human Rights Watch, 27/06/2014, [url](#)

ISIL.⁸⁷ Aerial attacks on rebel areas by the Iraqi Armed Forces and its allies also cause civilian casualties.⁸⁸ In Fallujah especially, many civilians were killed in bombardments by the Iraqi Air Force.⁸⁹

The UNAMI figures show also that the death toll among the Iraqi Armed Forces has also been rising since June 2014, as appears from the following table covering the period from March 2013 to December 2014.⁹⁰



Source: UNIRAQ

⁸⁷ Human Rights Watch, 19/07/2014, [url](#); Spiegel online, 26/06/2014, [url](#); The Guardian, 28/06/2014, [url](#), AI - Amnesty International, 23/12/2014, [url](#)

⁸⁸ Human Rights Watch, 23/07/2014, [url](#)

⁸⁹ United Nations Iraq, 04/01/2015, [url](#)

⁹⁰ United Nations Iraq, 04/01/2015, [url](#)

5. Geographic distribution of the violence

In Iraq, terrorist violence and armed confrontations are not evenly distributed but concentrated in a handful of central provinces. Cedoca analysed the Iraq Body Count figures for the period from 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2014.⁹¹ The following tables list the cities with the highest number of civilian deaths during this period.

deaths in 2013	City
3563	Baghdad
967	Mosul
432	Baquba
296	Tikrit
285	Tuz Khurmato
275	Kirkuk
233	Falluja
181	Ramadi
178	Samarra
146	Muqdadiya

deaths 2014	City
3932	Baghdad
1637	Falluja
1204	Mosul
736	Tikrit
627	Ramadi
500	Almeidat
450	Hit
313	Baiji
311	Samarra
289	Baquba

These figures show that big cities register the heaviest casualties: in 2013, 72% were registered in the ten abovementioned cities, and in 2014, 58%. One reason is that urban areas more often have a mixed population. Areas with a mixed Sunni-Shi'a population are more commonly found in cities than in the countryside.⁹²

The death toll per province has also been analysed. The following tables list the provinces with the highest number of civilian deaths registered by Iraq Body Count between January 2013 and December 2014.

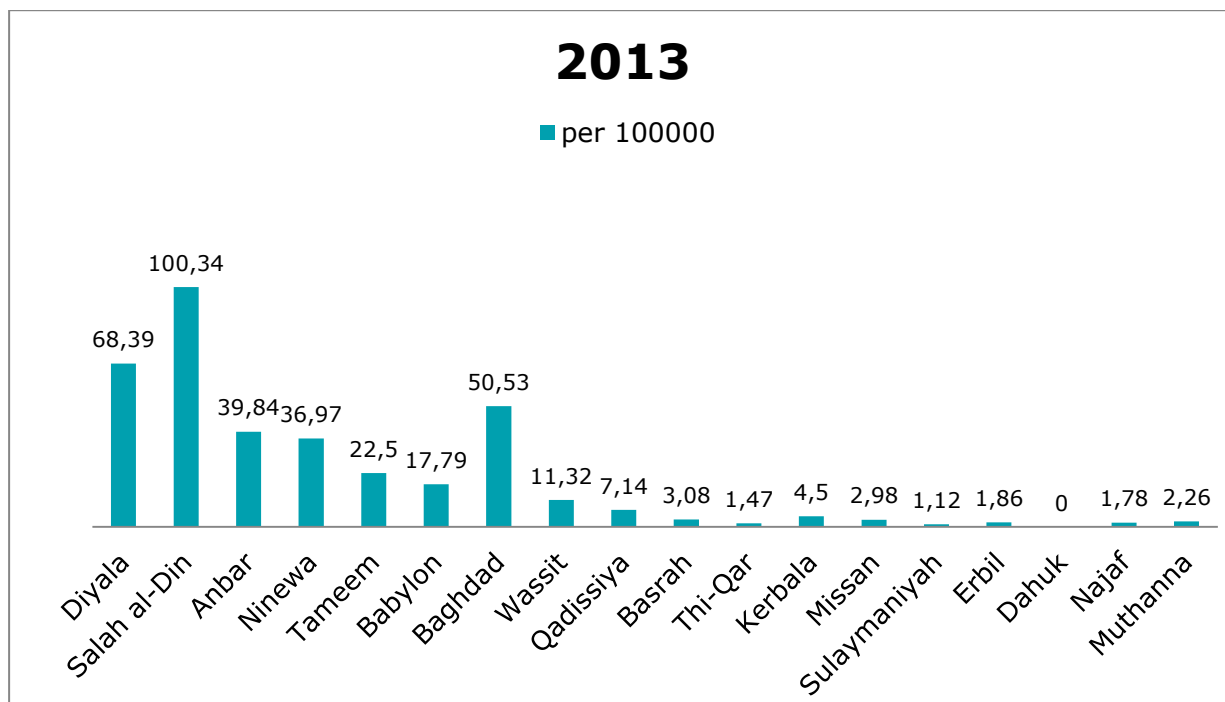
⁹¹ Cedoca retained the figures of 9,006 civilian deaths registered by Iraq Body Count in 2013 and 17,073 civilian deaths registered in 2014. For 70 deaths in 2013 and 524 in 2014, the province where they were killed could not be ascertained. These incidents consequently are not included in the tables. The figures from Iraq Body Count are not definitive but are used as the most relevant indicator for the extent of the violence in the region.

⁹² Brookings, 18/03/2013, [url](#)

deaths in 2013	province
3563	Baghdad
1428	Salah Al-Din
1217	Ninewa
987	Diyala
630	Anbar
327	Babylon
305	Tameem
138	Wassit
81	Qadisiya
78	Basrah
48	Kerbala
30	Missan
30	Erbil
27	Thi-Qar
23	Najaf
16	Muthanna
10	Sulaymaniyah
1	Dahuk

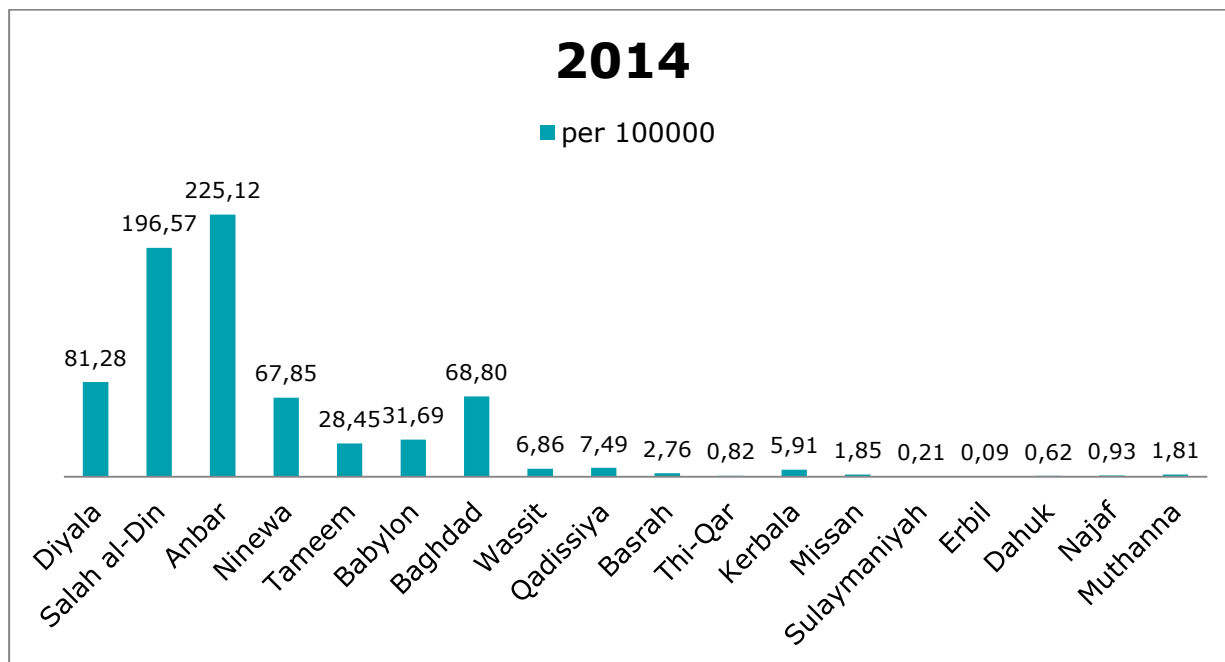
deaths in 2014	province
4854	Baghdad
3515	Anbar
2768	Salah Al-Din
2219	Ninewa
1173	Diyala
577	Babylon
397	Tameem
85	Qadisiya
83	Wassit
70	Basrah
63	Kerbala
18	Missan
15	Erbil
15	Thi-Qar
13	Muthanna
12	Najaf
7	Dahuk
4	Sulaymaniyah

To determine the intensity reached by the violence, the number of casualties per 100,000 inhabitants has been calculated. The following diagram shows that the violence reached its greatest intensity in the province of Salah al-Din, followed by Diyala, Baghdad, Anbar, Nineveh, Kirkuk (Tameem) and Babil.



Source: Iraq Body Count

For 2014, the same calculation shows that the violence reached its highest levels in Anbar, Salah al-Din, Diyala, Baghdad, Nineveh, Babil and Tameem.



Source: Iraq Body Count

5.1. South Iraq

5.1.1. Babil

Babil's population of 1,574,000 is 85 % Shi'a and 15 % Sunni.⁹³ In the past few years, Babil was the most violent of the southern provinces. The town of Hilla especially was hit by a number of deadly terror attacks. In 2013, Iraq Body Count counted 88 deaths in Hilla, and 161 in 2014.⁹⁴ Several attacks in the province clearly targeted Shi'a Muslims.⁹⁵ From 2013 onwards, a limited number of extrajudicial executions have been attributed to Shi'a militias.⁹⁶ In the mainly Sunni northern part of Babil, but also in other parts of the province, enhanced security measures have been into force since 2013. The number of checkpoints increased, roads between towns were regularly closed to traffic, and curfews were imposed.⁹⁷ On 9 March 2014, a particularly deadly suicide attack took place at a checkpoint in Hilla, killing 45 and injuring more than a hundred.⁹⁸

Initially, Babil Province was not directly affected by the ISIL offensive launched in June 2014 but by the end of June, fighting erupted in the north of the province, at Buhairat.⁹⁹ Heavy fighting between ISIL militants and Iraqi troops was also reported in Jurf al-Sakhar¹⁰⁰ and Hilla saw a number of bomb attacks.¹⁰¹ The Shi'a militias also intervened¹⁰² and a number of Sunni civilians were assassinated in the province.¹⁰³ During a prisoner transfer on 23 June 2014, 69 inmates were killed in unclear circumstances. Some sources accuse the police.¹⁰⁴ On 9 July 2014, the bodies of fifty men were found in Hamza al-Gharbi.¹⁰⁵ In July and August 2014, heavy fighting took place in Jurf al-Sakhar between Iraqi troops and Sunni insurgents.¹⁰⁶ In August 2014, leaflets asking the Shi'a population to leave were handed out in and around Jurf al-Sakhar.¹⁰⁷ On 6 September 2014, twenty men were abducted by unidentified gunmen in Iskandariya.¹⁰⁸ Although Iraqi troops regained control over Jurf al-Sakhar in October 2014, the situation in the region remained tense.¹⁰⁹ On 7 November 2014, 12 ISIL militants were killed while attacking an army checkpoint in Jurf al-Sakhar.¹¹⁰

On 9 November, one soldier was killed in a bombing attack with a suicide vest at a checkpoint in Yusufiyah, 12 soldiers and civilians were injured.¹¹¹

⁹³ SIGIR, 2011, [url](#)

⁹⁴ Iraq Body Count, 25/01/2015, [url](#)

⁹⁵ The New York Times, 16/06/2013, [url](#)

⁹⁶ Institute for the Study of War, 01/06/2013, [url](#)

⁹⁷ Iraqi News, 20/08/2013, [url](#)

⁹⁸ The New York Times, 09/03/2014, [url](#)

⁹⁹ Institute for the Study of War, 20/06/2014, [url](#); Institute for the Study of War, 24/06/2014, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ Institute for the Study of War, 29/06/2014, [url](#); Institute for the Study of War, 18/07/2014, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ Institute for the Study of War, 09/07/2014, [url](#)

¹⁰² Institute for the Study of War, 15/06/2014, [url](#)

¹⁰³ HRW - Human Rights Watch, 31/07/2014, [url](#)

Institute for the Study of War, 09/07/2014, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch, 11/07/2014, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵ BBC News, 09/07/2014, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶ RFE/RL - Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2/08/2014, [url](#); Agence France-Presse, 28/07/2014, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷ Reuters, 04/08/2014, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸ OHCHR - UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; UNAMI - United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, 02/10/2014, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ IRIN - Integrated Regional Information Network, 26/11/2014, [url](#)

¹¹⁰ Iraqi News, 07/11/2014, [url](#)

¹¹¹ Institute for the Study of War, 13/11/2014, [url](#)

On 2 December, a farm in Arab Ejbur was hit by three mortar rounds, killing 3 and injuring 8. On 3 December, unidentified men threw a grenade at a police checkpoint in Latifiyah, killing one police officer and injuring three others.¹¹²

On 18 December, a car bomb explosion in Mahmudiya caused an unknown number of casualties.¹¹³

On 24 December, a bombing attack with a suicide vest in Mada'in caused heavy casualties among Sahwa militia members who were waiting for their pay: 38 were killed and 56 injured. The following day, unidentified gunmen attacked the house of Sahwa members in Latifiyah, killing 3 militia members and injuring the wives of two of them. Also on 25 December, a checkpoint of the federal police in Arab Ejbur was attacked by mortar fire. One police officer and 5 civilians were killed, and 9 others were injured.¹¹⁴

On 29 December, unidentified gunmen attacked a checkpoint in Yusufiyah manned by the police and Sahwa militants. One police officer was killed and 9 of his colleagues were injured.¹¹⁵

On 31 December, an IED detonated in Latiyah, targeting a gathering of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMUs), which include Shi'a militias.¹¹⁶

During the first months of 2015, bomb and other attacks still took place in the north of Babil province, with various targets. The following list only includes incidents reported by the Institute for the Study of War. Other sources, such as Iraq Body Count or the Iraqi press, have also mentioned a number other incidents, such as arrests, foiled bomb attacks or small-scale attacks.

In chronological order:

On 8 January 2015, a bombing attack with a suicide vest killed 5 and injured 12 at a police checkpoint in Yusufiyah.¹¹⁷

On 9 January, according to an anonymous police source, an armed group tried to storm the police station in Arab Ejbur, provoking an army intervention. The *Baghdad Operations Command (BOC)* denied that any attack against the police had taken place. According to the BOC, shooting broke out between the army and a group of men who were placing IEDs in a village 10 to 15 km away.¹¹⁸

On 21 January, in Mada'in district, Iraqi troops captured an ISIL hideout where IEDs were manufactured.¹¹⁹

On 10 February, a car bomb exploded in Mahmudiyah, south of Baghdad. According to the first reports, 2 civilians were killed and 8 injured. The same day, an IED detonated near a busy market, killing one and injuring 7. The following day, a suicide car bombing killed 4 and injured 12 at the entrance to Mahmudiyah.¹²⁰

On 14 February, a member of parliament, Zaid al-Janabi, and his uncle Sheikh Qassim Swedan, a leader of the Janabat tribe, were abducted with 8 bodyguards between Baghdad and Mahmudiyah. Zaid al-Janabi was beaten before being released and the bodies of the sheikh and his bodyguards were found later on in Baghdad.¹²¹

¹¹² Institute for the Study of War, 3/12/2014, [url](#)

¹¹³ Institute for the Study of War, 19/12/2014, [url](#)

¹¹⁴ Institute for the Study of War, 26/12/2014, [url](#)

¹¹⁵ Institute for the Study of War, 29/12/2015, [url](#)

¹¹⁶ Institute for the Study of War, 31/12/2015, [url](#)

¹¹⁷ Institute for the Study of War, 09/01/2015, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ Institute for the Study of War, 11/01/2015, [url](#)

¹¹⁹ Institute for the Study of War, 21/01/2015, [url](#)

¹²⁰ Institute for the Study of War, 11/02/2015, [url](#)

¹²¹ Institute for the Study of War, 16/02/2015, [url](#)

On 26 February, a car bomb exploded near a courthouse in Mahmudiya, killing 3 and injuring 7.¹²²

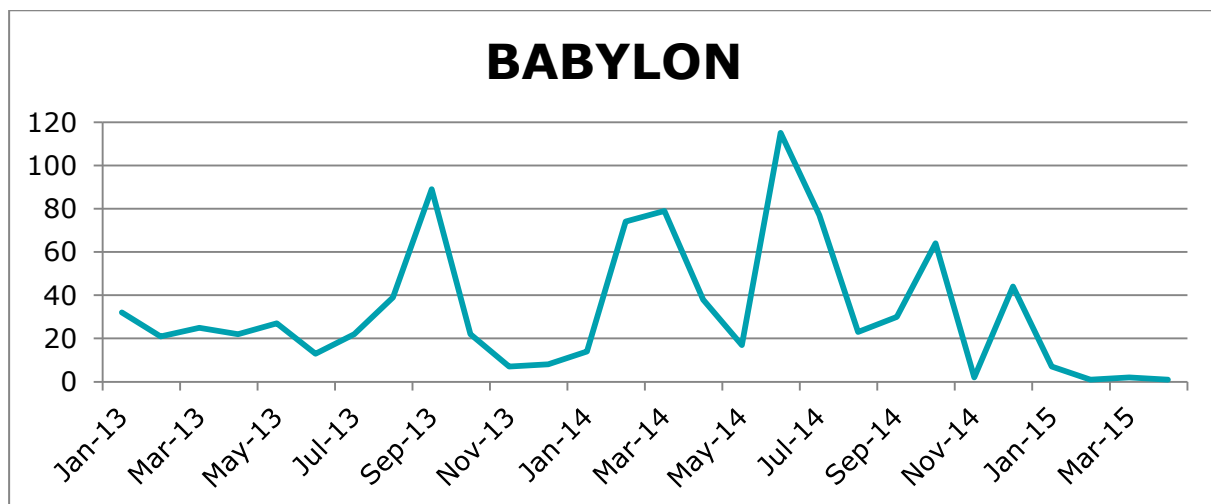
According to an anonymous security source, Iraqi forces and militia members opened fire on February 28 on a boat on the Euphrates between Jurf al-Sakhar and Amiriyat al-Fallujah. The boat was allegedly carrying ISIL militants on a reconnaissance mission. The boat sunk following the attack, according to the same source.¹²³

On 8 March, a car bomb detonated near the Mahmudiya post office, killing 2 and injuring 11.¹²⁴

On 26 April, a second car bomb went off near the Mahmudiya post office, killing 2 and injuring 13.¹²⁵

Although there were no major terror attacks causing heavy casualties in the first five months of 2015, the north of Babil province was still part of ISIL’s strategic goals, according to the Institute for the Study of War. This part of the province is crossed by two belts formed around Baghdad by a series of towns linked by highways. These belts were already used in 2006 and 2007 by al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) to infiltrate the capital and its environs, to move troops, to set up operational bases and to coordinate attacks. Through infiltration, ISIL is able to set up positions near urban targets and to pursue an offensive strategy with car bombs and suicide attacks. Although Baghdad is the main target of these attacks, violence also affects the northern areas of Babil Province situated along the two Baghdad belts.¹²⁶

The following chart is based on figures provided by Iraq Body Count and plots the number of civilians killed in Babil province between January 2013 and April 2015. The graph’s steep peaks and troughs show that the relatively low number of deaths in the first months of 2015 may not be indicative of a lasting trend.¹²⁷



Source: Iraq Body Count

¹²² Institute for the Study of War, 27/02/2015, [url](#)

¹²³ Institute for the Study of War, 1/03/2015, [url](#)

¹²⁴ Institute for the Study of War, 9/03/2015, [url](#)

¹²⁵ Institute for the Study of War, 27/04/2015, [url](#)

¹²⁶ Institute for the Study of War, 15/05/2015, [url](#)

¹²⁷ Iraq Body Count, 25/01/2015, [url](#)

5.1.2. Basra

Basra province's population of 2,408,000 is 85% Shi'a and 15% Sunni. Tribal and sectarian violence escalated particularly in 2007 in Basra city. Only when it launched an offensive in 2008 was the Iraqi army able to break the power of Shi'a and tribal militias in the city.¹²⁸ Since 2009, Basra's economic recovery has also improved living conditions.¹²⁹ Despite sporadic terror attacks, the security situation in the province improved markedly during the last few years.¹³⁰ In 2013, 63 civilians were killed in Basra city in sporadic political and terrorist violence, and 62 in 2014.¹³¹ As ISIL was stepping up its terror campaign against Shi'a targets in Baghdad, Basra city's Sunni minority was targeted by a number of violent attacks.¹³² In January 2014, Basra's provincial governor, Majid al-Nasrawi, announced the dismantling of some checkpoints in Basra city following the improved security situation.¹³³

Basra province was not directly affected by ISIL's June 2014 offensive and there were no direct confrontations between ISIL militants and Iraqi troops. A few small-scale bomb attacks were committed: on 11 June 2014, a bomb attack killed 10 and injured 10 on a market in the border town of Safwan.¹³⁴ On 5 July 2014, a bomb attack in downtown Basra left 5 dead and 10 injured.¹³⁵ UNAMI reports that many arrests took place in the Sunni areas of al-Zubair and Abu al-Khaseeb after the start of the ISIL offensive in central Iraq. The detainees' Sunni faith seems to have been the only reason for their arrest.¹³⁶ In July 2014, unidentified gunmen abducted 5 Sunni youths in the Abu al-Khaseeb area.¹³⁷ In July and August 2014, arrests were regularly carried out in Basra during security operations.¹³⁸

On 20 August, Nickolay Mladenov, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq, expressed his concern over recent acts of violence targeting Sunnis in several districts of Basra Province. According to Mladenov, at least 19 Sunni men, all civilians, were killed, and 19 injured. Most of these incidents were not reported by the media but they have all been checked with several sources by UNAMI. In all these incidents, the local Sunni community was of the view that the victims had been attacked only on account of their faith. According to Francesco Motta, head of UNAMI's Human Rights Department, the authorities attributed the attacks to unidentified gunmen and no arrests were made. According to Motta, several Sunni mosques and prominent Sunni organisations received anonymous threats calling on Sunnis to leave Basra or face death. In the days just before Motta's press release, houses belonging to Sunnis were marked by an 'X' in the Abu al-Khaseeb area and external lighting was painted in black. According to Motta, many Sunnis left the area following these threats.¹³⁹

¹²⁸ Institute for the Study of War, June 2008, [url](#)

¹²⁹ The Economist, 02/12/2010, [url](#)

¹³⁰ Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 30/05/2014, [url](#)

¹³¹ Iraq Body Count, 25/07/2014, [url](#)

¹³² Al Monitor, 13/09/2013, [url](#); BBC News, 06/11/2013 [url](#); BBC News, 03/10/2013, [url](#)

¹³³ Iraqi News, 05/01/2014, [url](#)

¹³⁴ Agence France-Presse, 11/06/2014, [url](#)

¹³⁵ United Nations Assistance Mission Iraq, July 2014, [url](#)

¹³⁶ United Nations Assistance Mission Iraq, July 2014, [url](#)

¹³⁷ OHCHR - UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; UNAMI - United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, 02/10/2014, [url](#)

¹³⁸ Iraqi News, 20/07/2014, [url](#); Iraqi News, 18/08/2014, [url](#)

¹³⁹ United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), 20/08/2014, [url](#); United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Human Rights Office, 10/09/2014, [url](#)

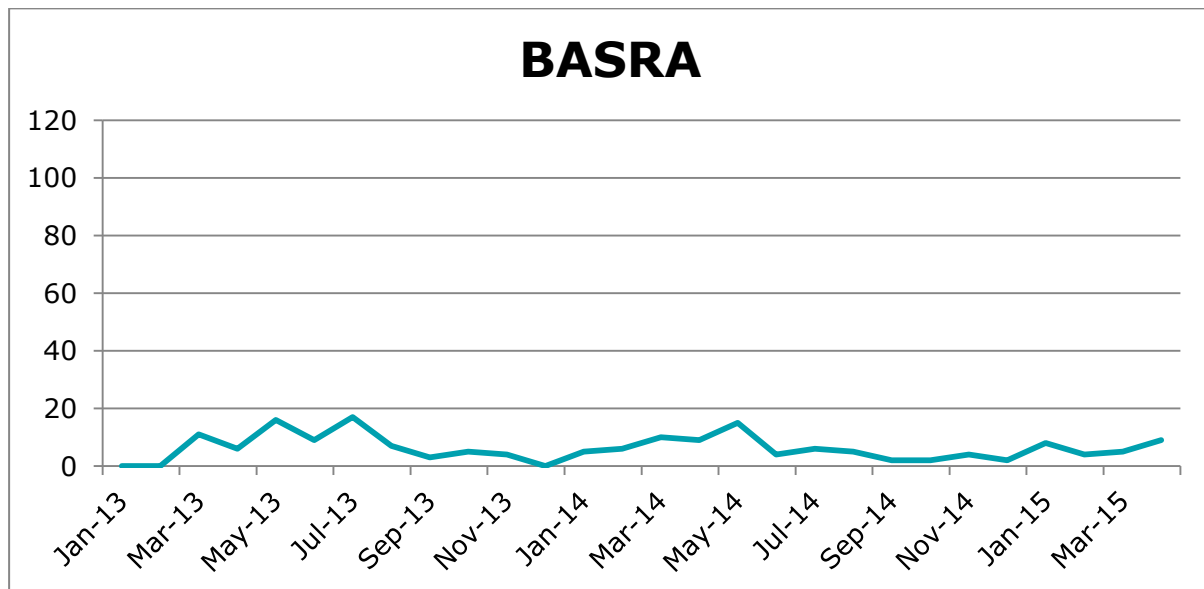
UN Special Representative Mladenov called upon the authorities, the police, and the security services in Basra to enhance security measures against acts of violence and threats against minorities and to give the members of the local Sunni community public and unequivocal assurances as to their safety and security. He urged the authorities to investigate the crimes and threats and to prosecute those responsible according to the law.¹⁴⁰

On 3 January 2015, unidentified gunmen fired shots at a group of Sunni clerics near Basra city. Three imams were killed and 2 injured.¹⁴¹

On 22 January, the imam of al-Amidiya mosque was shot dead.¹⁴²

On 18 March, a truck exploded near the port of Umm Qasr. According to the Institute for the Study of War, 3 persons were killed and an unknown number injured¹⁴³, whereas Iraq Body Count counted at least 12 dead.¹⁴⁴

The following chart is based on figures provided by Iraq Body Count and plots the number of civilians killed in Basra province between January 2013 and March 2015.¹⁴⁵



Source: Iraq Body Count

5.1.3. Kerbala

Kerbala province's population of 902,000 is 85% Shi'a and 15% Sunni.¹⁴⁶ Despite several attacks on Shi'a targets and rivalry between Shi'a militias, the violence in Kerbala province in 2006 and 2007

¹⁴⁰ United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), 20/08/2014, [url](#)

¹⁴¹ RFE/RL - Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 3/01/2015, [url](#)

¹⁴² Iraq Body Count, 25/01/2015, [url](#);

¹⁴³ Institute for the Study of War, 20/03/2015, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴ Iraq Body Count, 22/03/2015, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵ Iraq Body Count, 25/01/2015, [url](#)

did not reach the same levels as in central Iraq. The intensity of the violence decreased significantly after security matters were transferred from the Coalition troops to the local police and the Iraqi armed forces.¹⁴⁷ Over the period 2013-2014, a limited number of terror attacks were committed against Shi'a targets in the holy city of Kerbala.¹⁴⁸ In 2013, 48 civilians were killed in Kerbala city, and 11 civilians between January and June 2014.¹⁴⁹ Security measures were several times reinforced in 2013-2014 in the province.¹⁵⁰ Especially during the Ashura festival, which is attended every year by tens of thousands of pilgrims, strict security measures are imposed.¹⁵¹

Although ISIL's spokesman announced in the summer of 2014 that his movement would carry its offensive as far as Kerbala and Najaf,¹⁵² there were no large-scale armed confrontations between ISIL militants and Iraqi troops in Kerbala province. Security measures were enhanced in Kerbala and Iraqi troops were reinforced by volunteers.¹⁵³

Bomb attacks in the province are rare and usually small-scale. In the north of the province, a car bomb killed 4 and injured 3 on 11 June 2014.¹⁵⁴ In the first days of July 2014, fighting broke out in Kerbala when the Iraqi security forces tried to arrest Mahmoud al-Sarkhi, a Shi'a cleric known for his outspoken criticism of the Iraqi government.¹⁵⁵ Some 50 people, mainly al-Sharki supporters, died in this unusually fierce fighting.¹⁵⁶ No fighting has been reported in the city after 3 July.¹⁵⁷ The UNHCR pointed out that the IDPs sheltered in mosques and pilgrim guest houses may be at risk of eviction ahead of forthcoming religious festivals.¹⁵⁸

On 11 September, a car bomb detonated near the shrine of Imam Abbas, in the town centre of Kerbala, killing 2 and injuring 7.¹⁵⁹

On 30 September 2014, a bomb attack in the south of Kerbala city killed 8 and injured 10.¹⁶⁰ On 20 October 2014, four successive car bomb attacks killed 9 and injured 39 in Kerbala.¹⁶¹

On 25 November, the security forces intercepted four car bombs before they could enter Kerbala's western gates.¹⁶²

During the six-day long Arbaeen pilgrimage in December 2014, strict security measures were in force in Kerbala city.¹⁶³

On 11 December, the western outskirts of Kerbala city were hit by rockets and mortar rounds. One civilian was killed. Two car bombs were defused on the same day in Kerbala city.¹⁶⁴

¹⁴⁶ SIGIR, 2011, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷ The global intelligence files, 21/02/2013, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸ Agence France-Presse, 03/03/2013, [url](#); BBC, 07/06/2013, [url](#); Iraqi News, 29/04/2013, [url](#); Iraqi News, 03/03/2013, [url](#); Iraqi News, 16/06/2013, [url](#); Iraqi News, 25/04/2013, [url](#); The New York Times, 03/01/2013, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹ Iraq Body Count, 25/07/2014, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰ Iraqi News, 11/08/2013, [url](#); Iraqi News, 29/07/2013, [url](#)

¹⁵¹ Iraqi News, 14/11/2013, [url](#)

¹⁵² The New York Times, 26/06/2014, [url](#)

¹⁵³ The New York Times, 16/06/2013, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴ Iraqi News, 11/06/2014, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵ The Washington Post, 02/07/2014, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶ Reuters, 02/07/2014, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷ Institute for the Study of War, 24/07/2014, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸ UNHCR - UN High Commissioner for Refugees, October 2014, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹ Institute for the Study of War, 11/09/2014, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰ Iraqi News, 30/09/2014, [url](#)

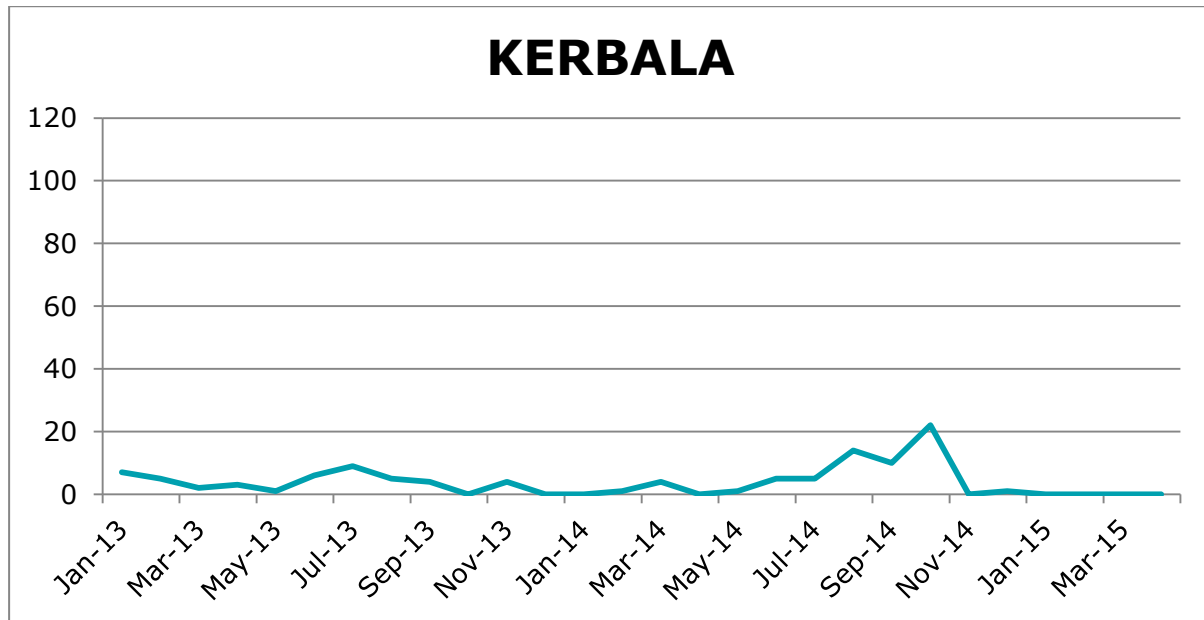
¹⁶¹ Iraqi News, 20/10/2014, [url](#)

¹⁶² Institute for the Study of War, 26/11/2014, [url](#)

¹⁶³ Iraqi News, 13/12/2014, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴ Institute for the Study of War, 12/12/2014, [url](#)

The following chart is based on figures provided by Iraq Body Count and plots the number of civilians killed in Kerbala province between January 2013 and March 2015.¹⁶⁵



Source: Iraq Body Count

5.1.4. Najaf

Najaf province has a population of 1,113,000, 99% Shi'a and 1% Sunni.¹⁶⁶ In the summer of 2004, Najaf city saw fierce fighting between the Mahdi Army and the US-led coalition troops.¹⁶⁷ Fighting again broke out in Najaf in 2007.¹⁶⁸ As more and more American troops were leaving the province, the security situation stabilised and violence was limited to sporadic terrorist attacks.¹⁶⁹ As ISIL intensified its terror campaign in 2013-2014, security measures were enhanced in Najaf.¹⁷⁰ In October 2013, a new security plan was announced for the Eid al-Adha religious holiday.¹⁷¹ The province of Najaf suffered heavy floods at the end of November 2013 and was declared a disaster area.¹⁷² In December 2013, a plane carrying pilgrims from Sweden landed for the first time at Najaf international airport.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁵ Iraq Body Count, 25/01/2015, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶ SIGIR, 2011, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷ Al Monitor, 09/09/2013, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸ BBC News, 31/01/2007, [url](#)

¹⁶⁹ Reuters, 29/04/2013, [url](#); BBC News, 03/01/2013, [url](#); The New York Times, 16/06/2013, [url](#)

¹⁷⁰ Iraqi News, 11/ 08/ 2013, [url](#); Iraqi News, 29/ 07/ 2013, [url](#); Iraqi News, 28/ 07/ 2013, [url](#); Iraqi News, 13/10/2013, [url](#)

¹⁷¹ Iraqi News, 13/10/2013, [url](#)

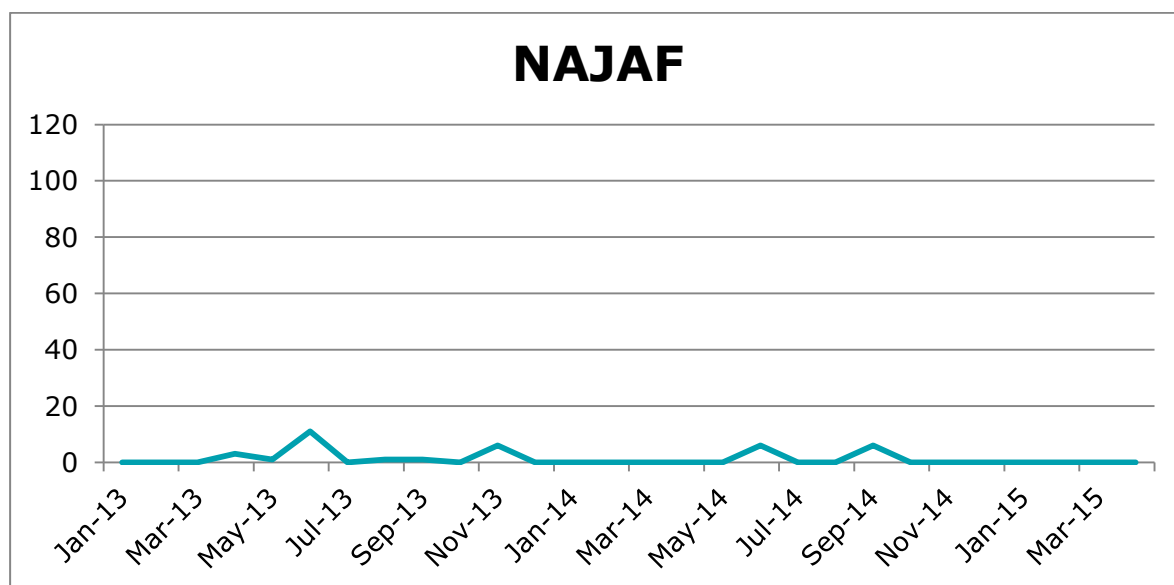
¹⁷² Iraqi News, 22/11/2013, [url](#)

¹⁷³ Iraqi News, 15/12/2013, [url](#)

Although ISIL’s spokesman announced in the summer of 2014 that his movement would carry its offensive as far as Kerbala and Najaf,¹⁷⁴ there were no large-scale armed confrontations between ISIL militants and Iraqi troops in Najaf province. Security measures were enhanced in the province and many Shi’a answered Ayatollah al-Sistani’s call to take arms and to back the Iraqi armed forces.¹⁷⁵ In the second half of 2014, suspects were repeatedly arrested during security operations in Najaf.¹⁷⁶ On 12 September 2014, 12 persons were injured in a bomb attack in Najaf’s al-Amir area.¹⁷⁷

During the period from January to April 2015, suspected terrorists and other suspects were arrested during several security operations in Najaf city and in other places in the province.¹⁷⁸

The following chart is based on figures provided by Iraq Body Count and plots the number of civilians killed in Najaf province between January 2013 and March 2015. Most of them were killed in Najaf city: 20 in 2013 and 12 in 2014, according to Iraq Body Count figures.¹⁷⁹



Source: Iraq Body Count

5.1.5. Wassit, Qadisiya, Thi-Qar, Missan and al-Muthanna

Due to their religious composition, the provinces of Wassit (pop. 1,056,000, 90% Shi’a, 5% Sunni Arabs and 5% Kurds), Qadisiya (pop. 1,033,000, 98% Shi’a and small Sunni and Kurd minorities), Thi-Qar (pop. 1,687,000, mainly Shi’a), Missan (pop. 944,000, 95% Shi’a), and al-Muthanna (pop. 650,000, 98% Shi’a and 2% Sunni), are for a large part spared by the ethno-sectarian conflict in

¹⁷⁴ The New York Times, 26/06/2014, [url](#)

¹⁷⁵ NPR, 03/07/2014, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶ Iraqi News, 24/11/2014, [url](#); Iraqi News, 11/09/2014, [url](#);

¹⁷⁷ Iraqi News, 12/09/2014, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸ Iraqi News, 04/01/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 07/02/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 16/02/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 23/03/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 02/04/2015; [url](#)

¹⁷⁹ Iraq Body Count, 25/01/2015, [url](#)

Iraq. Sporadic terror attacks¹⁸⁰, usually small-scale, are committed mainly in the towns of Kut (Wassit province) and Nasiriya (Thi-Qar province). In 2013, Iraq Body Count registered 73 civilians killed in Kut, and only 10 in 2014. In 2013, 26 civilians were killed in Nasiriya and 12 in 2014.¹⁸¹

With the increase of terror attacks in 2013-2014, security measures were enhanced in the region.¹⁸² In 2013, the police carried out several large-scale security operations in Wassit.¹⁸³ In December 2013, 15 Shi'a pilgrims were killed in Missan on their way back from the Arbreen celebrations in Kerbala.¹⁸⁴

The ISIL summer offensive of 2014 did not reach Wassit, Qadisiya, Thi-Qar, Missan or al-Muthanna province and there were no direct confrontations between ISIL militants and Iraqi troops. Violence in the region is limited to sporadic bomb attacks causing a relatively low number of civilian casualties.¹⁸⁵ Arrests are regularly taking place during security operations in the region.¹⁸⁶ The number of civilians killed in the five provinces remained low in 2015 (see the following charts).

From January until the beginning of April 2015, the security forces arrested many suspects. According to Iraqi News, up to 765 arrests took place during this period, but it is sometimes difficult to know whether on terrorism or on ordinary criminal charges.¹⁸⁷

A member of the provincial assembly was shot at in Kut (Wassit) and one of his bodyguards was injured.¹⁸⁸

The following chart is based on figures provided by Iraq Body Count and plots the number of civilians killed in Wassit province between January 2013 and March 2015.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁰ Iraqi News, 21/04/2014, [url](#); Iraqi News, 11/06/2014, [url](#)

¹⁸¹ Iraq Body Count, 25/07/2014, [url](#)

¹⁸² Iraqi News, 30/05/2013, [url](#); Iraqi News, 10/07/2013, [url](#)

¹⁸³ Iraqi News, 03/09/2013, [url](#); Iraqi News, 13/02/2014, [url](#); Iraqi News, 27/12/2013, [url](#); Iraqi News, 17/04/2014, [url](#)

¹⁸⁴ Iraqi News, 25/12/2013, [url](#)

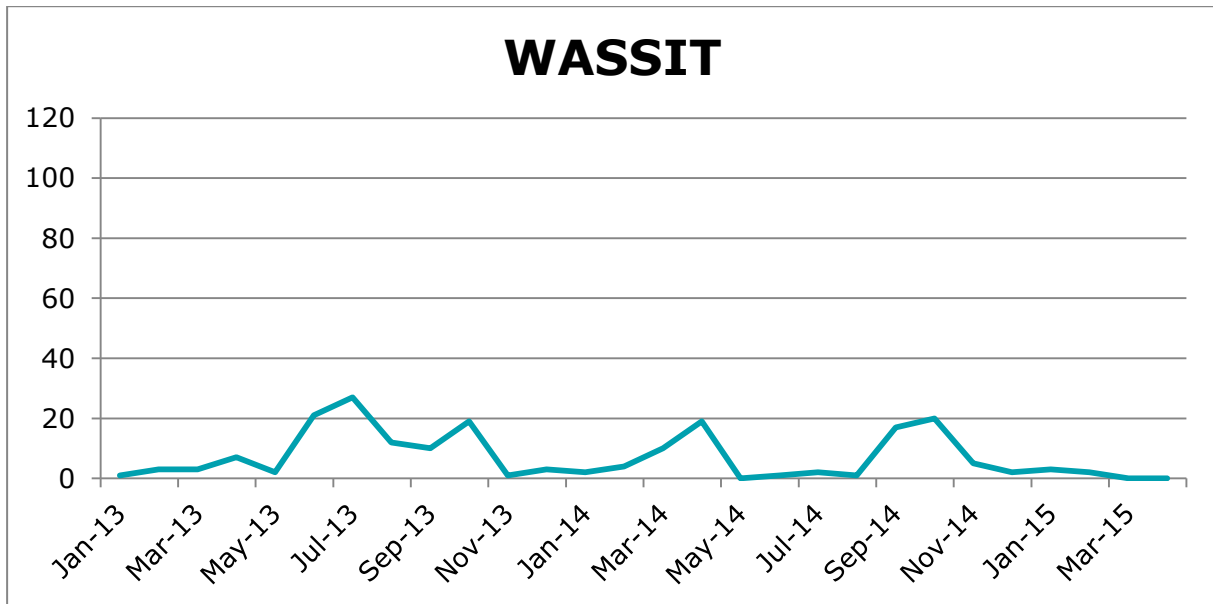
¹⁸⁵ Iraqi News, 05/11/2014, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶ Iraqi News, 03/02/2014, [url](#); Iraqi News, 03/05/2014, [url](#); Iraqi News, 21/10/2014, [url](#); Iraqi News, 18/11/2014, [url](#); Iraqi News, 27/10/2014, [url](#); Iraqi News, 17/01/2015, [url](#)

¹⁸⁷ Iraqi News, 12/01/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 17/01/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 17/01/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 25/01/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 26/01/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 27/01/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 31/01/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 03/02/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 05/02/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 05/02/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 05/02/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 06/02/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 07/02/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 09/02/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 10/02/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 14/02/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 16/02/2015, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸ Iraqi News, 21/02/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 19/02/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 02/03/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 03/03/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 04/03/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 12/03/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 21/03/2015, [url](#); Iraqi News, 31/03/2015, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹ Iraq Body Count, 25/01/2015, [url](#)

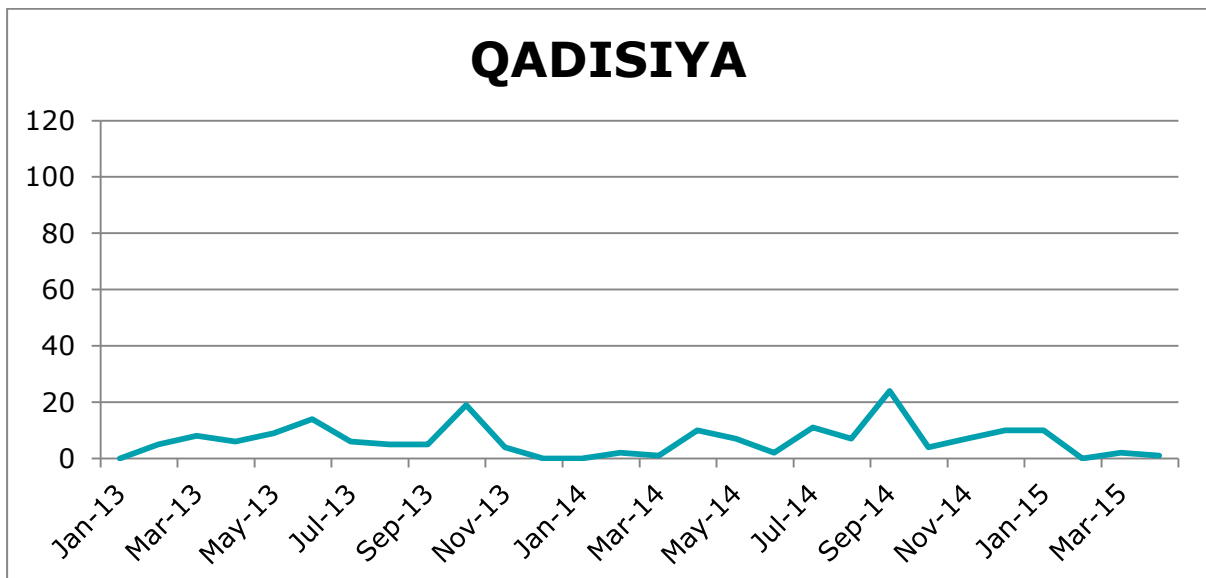


Source: Iraq Body Count

On 11 September 2014, a car bomb detonated in the town of Diwaniyah, in Qadisiya province, in front of the National Reform Trend party headquarters. Three guards were killed in this attack against the party of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁹⁰

Also in Diwaniyah, a civilian was shot dead by unidentified gunmen on 31 January 2015.¹⁹¹

The following chart is based on figures provided by Iraq Body Count and plots the number of civilians killed in Qadisiya province between January 2013 and March 2015.¹⁹²



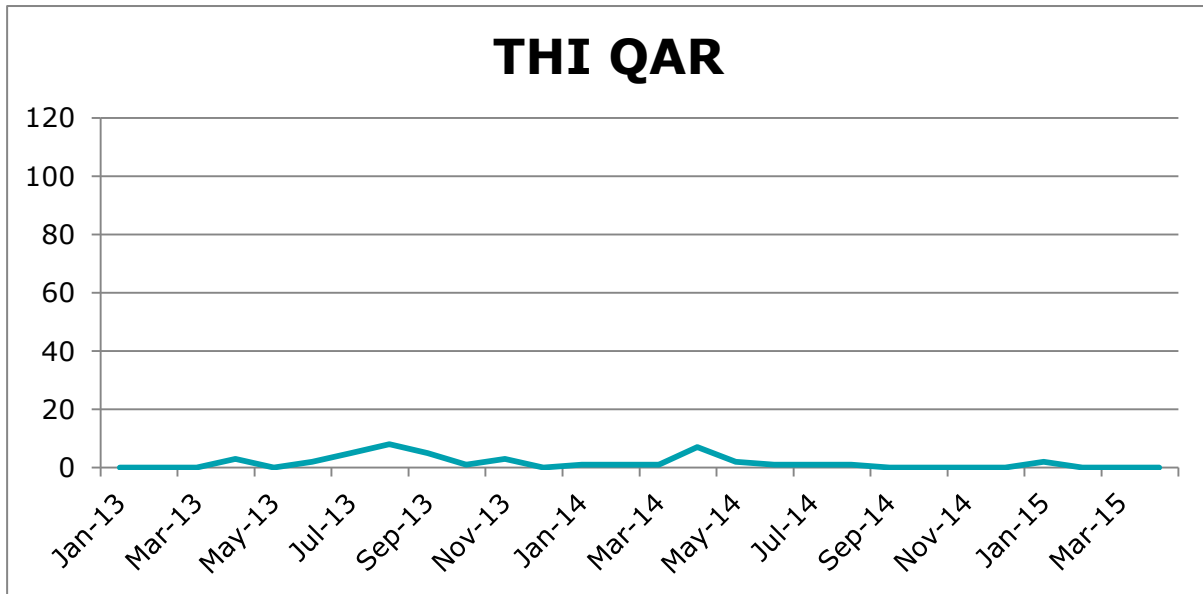
¹⁹⁰ Institute for the Study of War, 11/09/2014, [url](#)

¹⁹¹ Iraqi News, 31/01/2015, [url](#); Iraq Body Count, 01/02/2015, [url](#)

¹⁹² Iraq Body Count, 25/01/2015, [url](#)

Source: Iraq Body Count

The following chart is based on figures provided by Iraq Body Count and plots the number of civilians killed in Thi Qar province between January 2013 and March 2015.¹⁹³



Source: Iraq Body Count

According to Iraq Body Count, 10 people were killed by gunfire in Amara, Misan province, on 16 March 2015.¹⁹⁴ No direct confirmation of this incident could be found in other sources, but on 23 April an article from All Iraq News Agency reported that a tribal confrontation had taken place in Amara a few weeks earlier.¹⁹⁵

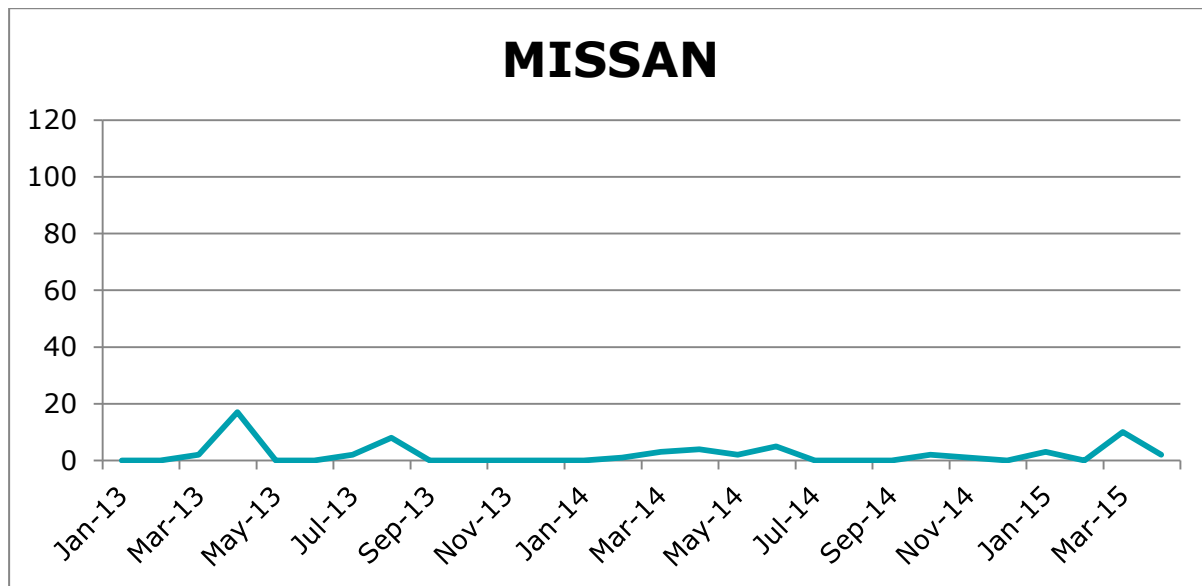
The following chart is based on figures provided by Iraq Body Count and plots the number of civilians killed in Misan province between January 2013 and March 2015.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ Iraq Body Count, 25/01/2015, [url](#)

¹⁹⁴ Iraq Body Count, 22/03/2015, [url](#)

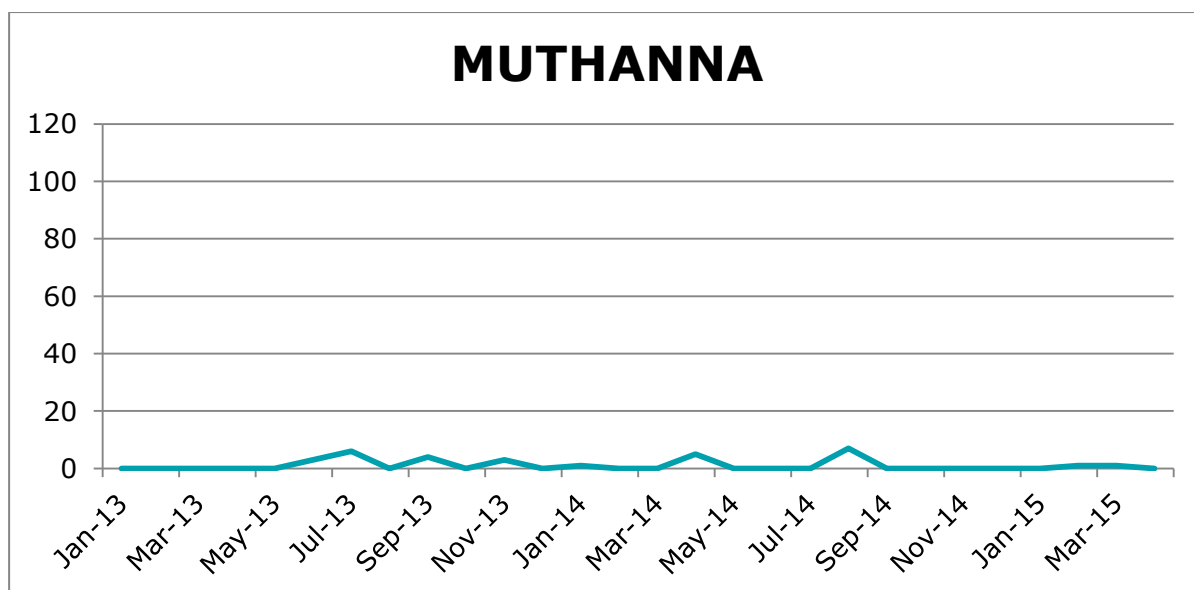
¹⁹⁵ All Iraq News Agency, 23/04/2015, [url](#)

¹⁹⁶ Iraq Body Count, 25/01/2015, [url](#)



Source: Iraq Body Count

The following chart is based on figures provided by Iraq Body Count and plots the number of civilians killed in al-Muthanna province between January 2013 and March 2015.¹⁹⁷



Source: Iraq Body Count

¹⁹⁷ Iraq Body Count, 25/01/2015, [url](#)

6. Summary

The nine southern Iraqi provinces were not directly affected by the offensive launched by ISIL in central Iraq in June 2014, with the exception of the north of Babil province, where ISIL tried to open new lines of attack towards Baghdad south and southwest of the capital. This offensive was accompanied by numerous bomb attacks and led to heavy fighting in some towns. Although ISIL was unable to gain control over the north of Babil and the number of civilian casualties has markedly decreased since the beginning of 2015, the security situation in Babil province has not yet improved on a lasting basis. The fact that ISIL controls large areas in neighbouring Anbar province increases the risk of a new upsurge in violence.

In the mainly Shi'a southern provinces of Najaf, Kerbala, Basra, Wassit, Qadisiya, Thi-Qar, Missan and al-Muthanna, there were no direct confrontations between ISIL and the Iraqi armed forces. The violence in these provinces was limited to sporadic terrorist attacks of decreasing frequency and intensity. The number of civilian casualties is significantly lower than in Babil province, and far below the levels reached in central Iraq, including Baghdad.

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