



Iraq - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 26, 27 and 30 July 2012

Information on sectarian conflict in 2012 in Iraq including indiscriminate attacks on civilians

In July 2012 a *United Nations Security Council* report notes:

“During the reporting period, there were several high-casualty attacks across the country. On 19 April, a wave of bombings and attacks in six governorates killed at least 50 people and injured some 250. On 31 May, in various attacks in Baghdad, 33 civilians were killed and 14 injured. On 4 June, a suicide attack on a Shiite religious office in Baghdad for which the Islamic State of Iraq claimed responsibility left 20 people dead and 110 injured. On 13 June, up to 27 car bombs were detonated across Iraq. In Baghdad, 10 attacks killed 33 Shiite pilgrims and security personnel and injured another 61. In Hilla, 22 people, mainly civilians, were killed when a bomb was detonated outside a restaurant usually frequented by police personnel. On 16 June, 42 Shiite pilgrims and security personnel were killed and 135 injured in Baghdad” (United Nations Security Council (11 July 2012) *Third report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2001 (2011)*, pp.6-7).

This report also points out that:

“During the reporting period, the overall security situation in Iraq remained unpredictable, with a significant number of deadly attacks, especially during religious celebrations” (ibid, p.12).

The *United Nations News Service* in April 2012 states:

“The top United Nations envoy in Iraq has strongly condemned a series of bombings that took place today, and called on the Iraqi people to remain steadfast amid attempts to derail the country’s quest for democracy and stability. In the latest wave of attacks, explosions were reported in the capital, Baghdad, as well as in the cities of Baquba, Kirkuk, Samarra, Dibil and Taji, according to media reports, which add that at least 35 people have been killed and 100 more have been injured. ‘These horrendous crimes being committed against the Iraqi people need to stop for Iraq to achieve the prosperous and secure future its people duly deserve,’ the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Iraq, Martin Kobler, said in a statement. He voiced concern at the ongoing violence in the country and the targeting of security officials and personnel, as well as the indiscriminate attacks on civilians” (United Nations News Service (19 April 2012) *Condemning latest attacks, UN envoy urges Iraqis to remain steadfast against threats*).

Commenting on the security situation, the *United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq* in April 2012 notes:

“Other attacks across the country have indiscriminately targeted civilians, resulting in large numbers of deaths and injuries, including children. In the first three months of 2012, a total of 613 civilians were killed and 1,800 were injured” (United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (10 April 2012) *Briefing to the Security Council by Martin Kobler, Special Representative of the Secretary-General*).

A paper issued in May 2012 by the *UNHCR* states:

“Iraq continues to experience significant civilian casualties” (UNHCR (31 May 2012) *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Iraq*, p.44).

This document also notes:

“While most attacks by armed groups are targeted against specific groups and individuals, due to the nature of the tactics employed, including large-scale bombings and attacks in public places, they inevitably have an indiscriminate effect, causing significant casualties among bystanders” (ibid, p.44).

This report also points out that:

“While open sectarian violence between Arab Sunnis and Arab Shi’ites ended in 2008, armed Sunni groups continue to target Shi’ite civilians with the apparent aim of reigniting sectarian tension. Sectarian-motivated violence includes: mass-casualty attacks targeting Shi’ite civilians and pilgrims; threats against Sunnis in Shi’ite majority areas and Shi’ites in Sunni majority areas; as well as targeted killings of both Sunni and Shi’ite clerics and scholars” (ibid, p.25).

A report issued in May 2012 by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* notes:

“Police and health officials in Iraq say bomb blasts at a pet market in Baghdad have killed at least five people...Violence has diminished in Iraq since its heights in 2006 and 2007, but there are still frequent attacks targeting security forces and civilians in apparent attempts to undermine the government or settle scores in sectarian rivalries” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (18 May 2012) *Bombs At Baghdad Pet Market Kill 5*).

In June 2012 a document published by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* states:

“At least 20 people are reported to have been killed in a car bomb explosion in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad. The blast occurred outside a government-supported office that deals with Shi’ite issues in central Baghdad. Officials say the bomb killed at least 60 others are injured. The toll could not be independently confirmed. Police said the blast targeted the Shi’ite Endowment office, a government-run body that tends to Shi’ite religious sites. There was no claim of responsibility for the attack, but reports suggested that Sunni militants were suspected” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (4 June 2012) *Car Bomb In Baghdad Kills At Least 20*).

A publication by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* in June 2012 points out that:

“Sectarian tensions have been high in Iraq since the withdrawal of U.S. forces in December, with attacks by al-Qaeda-linked Sunni Islamists still reported against Shi’ite targets” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (11 June 2012) *Iraq: Deaths reported in Baghdad mortar attack near Shi’ite shrine*).

A document released in June 2012 by *Amnesty International* states:

“A wave of bombings and other attacks in several Iraqi provinces including a number of locations in Baghdad that reportedly killed at least 55 people and wounded dozens during a major Shi’a religious festival has been condemned by Amnesty International” (Amnesty International (13 June 2012) *Iraq: Amnesty International condemns killings of civilians during Shi’a festival*).

This report also notes:

“Deliberate attacks on members of the general population show a complete disregard for the right to life and can never be justified,’ said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Amnesty International’s Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa” (ibid).

It is also stated in this report that:

“Violence in Iraq has increased considerably since the last US soldiers left the country in December 2011. In January 2012, at least 55 civilians were killed in suicide bombs and other attacks across the country. There has been a wave of attacks on the Shi’a community in recent days, including on Sunday when six people were killed in a mortar attack in a square filled with Shi’a pilgrims” (ibid).

In June 2012 *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* states in a report that:

“Reports from northern Iraq say a roadside bomb has killed one security contractor and wounded at least two others...At least four other people have died in blasts across the country. The violence comes a day after more than 30 people were killed in two car bombs targeting Shi’ite pilgrims in the capital, Baghdad. More than 70 people were also killed in a wave of attacks across Iraq on June 13” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (17 June 2012) *Five reported killed in Iraq bombings*).

A document published in June 2012 by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* notes:

“Officials say a series of attacks in Baghdad and to the north of the Iraqi capital has killed at least 12 people and wounded some 50 others. Officials said a car bomb in a popular Baghdad market on June 28 killed eight people and wounded 30, while twin car bombs killed two people and wounded 15 in Taji, 25 kilometers to the north” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (28 June 2012) *Bombs kill 12 in Iraq, wound around 50*).

This report also states:

“The deaths brought to around 200 the number of people killed in Iraq since June 13. Violence in Iraq has declined significantly since its peak in 2006 and 2007, but attacks remain common amid rivalries between Iraq's majority Shi'ites and minority Sunnis” (ibid).

In June 2012 a report published by the *Institute for War & Peace Reporting* points out that:

“Iraqi politicians from across the ethnic and religious spectrum agree that a wave of attacks targeting Shia Iraqis this month appears to be a deliberate move by extremists to reignite the sectarian conflict of past years. The ‘Islamic State of Iraq’, a Sunni militant group affiliated to al-Qaeda, has claimed responsibility for most of the serial bombings that have left over 150 people dead since the beginning of June. The carnage began on June 4 with 24 dead and more than 120 injured when a suicide bomber detonated his vehicle at the Baghdad headquarters of the Shia Endowment, a body which manages religious sites across Iraq. On June 13, about 75 people were killed and over 200 were wounded in a string of attacks across the country. Once again, most of the casualties were Shia Muslims” (Institute for War & Peace Reporting (20 June 2012) *Iraq Bombs Deliberate Ploy to Incite Sunni-Shia Conflict*).

A publication issued by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* in July 2012 notes:

“A series of bombings across Iraq has killed at least 33 people and wounded nearly 100 others. In the deadliest July 3 blast, officials said at least 25 people were killed and some 50 others injured in a vehicle bomb explosion that hit a busy market in the southern Iraqi city of Diwaniya” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (3 July 2012) *Bombings Kill 33, Injure 100 Others Across Iraq*).

This document also points out:

“Iraq's Sunni Al-Qaeda wing has claimed responsibility for some recent bombings targeting Shi'ites” (ibid).

The *New York Times* in a report published in July 2012 notes:

“Al Qaeda in Iraq carried out one of the most coordinated and baldly sectarian series of attacks in years on Monday, aiming for Shiite targets with car bombs, checkpoint ambushes, and assaults on a military base and police officers in their homes in an offensive that its leadership appeared to equate with the Sunni-led uprising in neighboring Syria” (New York Times (23 July 2012) *Iraq Insurgents Kill at Least 100 After Declaring New Offensive*).

This document also points out:

“The offensive, coming in the early days of Ramadan, the monthlong religious rite of fasting by day and feasting by night, was without precedent over the past few years, at least in the sheer number of attacks, spread over so many locations in a third of Iraq's 18 provinces, from north to south. It raised new concerns about the government's ability to contain the violence, six months after the last American troops left the country following more than eight years

of occupation and civil war that upended Saddam Hussein's Sunni-led minority power base and empowered Iraq's long-repressed Shiite majority" (ibid).

Cable News Network/CNN in July 2012 states in a news report that::

"The number of dead in a wave of attacks across Iraq on Monday has risen to 103, authorities said Tuesday, making it the deadliest day in the country this year, according to a CNN count. The attacks wounded 267 people, they said" (*Cable News Network/CNN (25 July 2012) Iraq suffers deadliest day of 2012 as 103 are killed*).

This publication also notes:

"Monday's violence evoked the bloodiest days of the war, when random and targeted attacks routinely killed scores of people per day. Attacks have declined sharply since their peak in 2006, but insurgents have continued to target civilians and security forces since the United States withdrew its forces in December. Before Monday's attacks, the deadliest day this year had been June 13, when a number of coordinated attacks nationwide killed 93 people" (ibid).

A report released in July 2012 by *Reuters* states:

"Al Qaeda's affiliate in Iraq has claimed responsibility for scores of attacks across the country targeting mostly Shi'ite Muslim targets this week which killed and wounded hundreds of people" (*Reuters (25 July 2012) Al Qaeda claims responsibility for attacks in Iraq*).

This report also states that:

"At least 116 people were killed and about 300 wounded in bomb and gun attacks on Monday, by far the bloodiest day of violence since U.S. troops withdrew in December. A day earlier 20 were killed in bombings as part of a co-ordinated surge of violence" (ibid).

It is also noted in this document that:

"...deadly attacks like those on Monday have highlighted the deficiencies of the Iraqi security forces in stopping insurgents" (ibid).

This publication also states:

"Political tensions have escalated between Iraq's main Shi'ite, Sunni and Kurdish factions since the U.S. withdrawal" (ibid).

Commenting on recent security issues, in July 2012 *Agence France Presse* states:

"The latest violence comes after the country suffered a spike in unrest in June when at least 282 people were killed, according to an AFP tally based on figures supplied by officials and medics. Although those figures are markedly lower than during the peak of Iraq's communal bloodshed from 2006 to 2008,

attacks remain common" (Agence France Presse (24 July 2012) *111 killed in Iraq's deadliest day in two years*).

A document issued by *BBC News* in July 2012 points out that:

"Every month this year, there have been major co-ordinated attacks in Iraq, using car bombs, mortars and gunfire. Reports on the violence are routinely accompanied by the proviso that it is nowhere near as bad as it once was. But the rate has accelerated worryingly in June and July - with such attacks now being seen every few days. The targets have mostly been the Shia community, the security forces and government officials. The violence is normally blamed on Sunni insurgents" (BBC News (23 July 2012) *Iraq attacks 'aimed at exploiting fragility'*).

A report issued in July 2012 by *BBC News* states:

"There has been an increase in sectarian violence across Iraq in recent months amid worsening political tensions" (BBC News (22 July 2012) *Wave of bombings in Iraq kills at least 17*).

The *Economist Intelligence Unit* in July 2012 notes:

"According to Iraq Body Count, the number of civilian deaths averaged just over 300 per month in the first half of 2012, slightly less than in 2010-11, but far lower than in 2006-07 when the average monthly death toll was more than 2,000. Nevertheless, these figures are indicative of the ongoing insecurity in Iraq" (Economist Intelligence Unit (24 July 2012) *Iraq suffers deadliest day since withdrawal of US troops*).

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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