



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Iraq

Iraq – IRQ39094 – Badr Organisation –
Babel – Wassit – Children

15 August 2011

1. Is there any information indicating that the Badr Brigade is continuing to commit human rights abuses in Iraq?

According to Jane's Sentinel Country Risk Assessment of January 2011, "the Badr Organisation has become an increasingly loosely-knit network of local militias that often serve local power-brokers and engage in freelance criminal and sectarian violence...[t]he discipline that SIIC [Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council] built during its years in exile has frayed to some extent since the organisation returned to Iraq and absorbed huge numbers of Iraqis into its ranks".¹ No information was located to suggest that these militias are acting under the banner of the Badr Organisation, or to indicate that any criminal or sectarian violence was sanctioned or tolerated by the Badr Organisation.

In June 2010, *Country Advice IRQ36731* quoted Amnesty International (AI) as stating:

Shi's militia groups continue to commit human rights abuses, including kidnapping, torture and murder of civilians. Some of these groups, including the Mahdi Army and the Badr Organization, are associated to political parties represented in the Iraqi government and parliament.²

The same advice, however, noted that the AI report "does not provide any information about who is being targeted, the Badr Organisation's motives, or whether it is acting independently".³ Such broad generalisations on the part of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including AI, should be treated with caution where current evidence is not provided. Furthermore, the AI statement regarding the Badr Organisation is not corroborated by other sources.

As noted in *Country Advice IRQ38802* of June 2011, it is well-documented that the Badr Brigade claims to have ceased militia activities in 2003, and that it changed its name to the Badr Organisation during the US government's crackdown on militia groups.⁴ Badr militia were largely absorbed into the Iraqi Security Forces, and the organisation claims to have transitioned from a militia into a legitimate political party.⁵

No reporting was located to suggest that the Badr Organisation itself is currently conducting violent militia activities. It is plausible, however, that some former Badr Brigade members

¹ UK Home Office 2011, *Country of Origin Report – Iraq*, 25 March, Section 12.14 – Attachment 1

² Amnesty International 2010, *Iraq: Human Rights Briefing*, 1 March, p.10
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE14/004/2010/en/20f0c384-7dc6-409d-a0fb-767c349ef41c/mde140042010en.html> – Accessed 25 May 2010 – Attachment 2

³ RRT Country Advice 2010, *Country Advice IRQ36731*, 2 June – Attachment 3

⁴ RRT Country Advice 2011, *Country Advice IRQ38802*, 6 June – Attachment 4

⁵ 'Iraq: Militia groups' 2005, Council on Foreign Relations website, 9 June <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/iraq-militia-groups/p8175> – Accessed 31 May 2011 – Attachment 5

may be acting on their own volition, or that they may have formed smaller off-shoot militias under different names.

Throughout Iraq, members and officials of the Badr Organisation are often themselves the targets of sectarian violence, in particular from the al-Qa'ida-affiliated Islamic State of Iraq. In July 2011, a statement attributed to the Ministry of Information of the Islamic State of Iraq claimed responsibility for a suicide attack targeting a meeting attended by senior security officers, local council officials and 'criminals' from the Badr Organisation. Two explosions destroyed the meeting venue, "burning at least 40 military and government vehicle; killing at least 70 apostate soldiers including the hardened criminal of the security leaders, Shaykhs of tribes, and officials of Badr Organization".⁶

There is also evidence that individual members of the Badr Organisation are being targeted for assassination. In June 2011, a Badr Organisation leader survived an assassination attempt when a sticky bomb attached to his vehicle exploded.⁷ Sadiq Shakir Juwayyid, undersecretary of the Foreign Minister and a leader of the Badr Organisation, was killed by an assassination unit armed with silenced weapons in April 2011.⁸ In January 2011, a Badr Organisation guard was killed as a result of an explosion close to the Badr Organisation's headquarters in Baghdad's Kamaliya district.⁹ A senior Badr Organisation official in Kirkuk was killed by gunmen in front of his house in January 2009.¹⁰

2. What is the situation in this regard in Babel?

Despite further research being conducted, no additional information regarding Badr Organisation activity was located contrary to that provided in *Country Advice IRQ38802* of June 2011, which states that the Badr Organisation per se no longer conducts militia activities.¹¹ *Country Advice IRQ38983* of July 2011 provides an overview of the current security situation in Iraq more broadly.¹²

3. What is the situation in this regard in Kut/Wassit?

Please refer to the response for [Question 2](#).

4. Were there reports of human rights abuses by the Badr Brigade in Babel in around late 2009?

⁶ 'Islamic State of Iraq Claims 17 Attacks in Iraq Between 4 June – 11 July' 2011, Open Source Center, Source: Global Jihad Network (in Arabic), 18 July, https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_200_203_121123_43/content/Display/GMP20110719836002#index=33&searchKey=5709001&rpp=10 – Accessed 28 July 2011 – Attachment 6

⁷ 'ISI Claims 19 Attacks on Iraqi, US Forces in Diyala, 7 May-2 Jun' 2011, Open Source Centre website, Source: Al-Fajr Media Center, 12 July https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_200_203_121123_43/content/Display/GMP20110711495002#index=20&searchKey=5782729&rpp=10 – Accessed 8 August 2011 – Attachment 7

⁸ 'Islamic State of Iraq Claims 22 May Baghdad Bombings, Other Operations' 2011, Open Source Centre website, Source: Al-Fajr Media Center, 2 June

https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_200_203_121123_43/content/Display/GMP20110602479002#index=46&searchKey=5782729&rpp=10 – Accessed 8 August 2011 – Attachment 8

⁹ 'Shiite Badr's guard killed, 4 others injured in Baghdad' 2011, *Aswat al-Iraq*, 16 January http://en.aswatiraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=140568&l=1 – Accessed 8 August 2011 – Attachment 9

¹⁰ 'Badr Organization Official Assassinated in Touz' 2009, Iraq Updates website, Source: *Voices of Iraq*, 9 January http://admin.iraqupdates.net/p_articles.php/article/43116 – Accessed 8 August 2011 – Attachment 10

¹¹ RRT Country Advice 2011, *Country Advice IRQ38802*, 6 June – Attachment 4

¹² RRT Country Advice 2011, *Country Advice IRQ38983*, 1 July – Attachment 11

No specific information was located regarding reports of human rights abuses by the Badr Brigade in Babel in late 2009. However, as referred to in the response to [Question 1](#), the fragmented nature of the former Badr Brigade as it currently exists has seen members engage in freelance criminal and sectarian violence¹³, and it is plausible that these individuals may have conducted such activities.

5. What is the situation for children in Babel and Wassit in particular?

The security/welfare situation for many children in Babel and Wassit – and indeed in Iraq in general – is not good. In July 2011, *IRIN News* reported that “[d]ecades of war and international sanctions have turned Iraq into one of the worst places for children in the Middle East and North Africa, with about 3.5 million living in poverty, 1.5 million under the age of five undernourished and 100 infants dying every day”.¹⁴ The United Nations Security Council’s (UNSC) *Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Iraq* of June 2011 details a wide range of human rights abuses endured by Iraqi children. The report categorises the grave violations of children’s rights thusly:

a. Recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups;

For the duration of the Iraq conflict, children have been recruited, trained and used to take part in hostilities by armed groups such as al-Qa’ida in Iraq, Awakening Councils, and the Mahdi Army. Iraqi children have been used to “spy and scout, transport military supplies and equipment, videotape attacks for propaganda purposes, and plant explosive devices and actively engage in attacks against security forces and civilians”. They have also been used as suicide bombers by insurgent groups, and to unknowingly lure security forces into ambushes.¹⁵

b. Killing or maiming of children;

According to the UNSC, “[c]hildren continue to be killed and injured, as they remain exposed to a wide range of risks as a result of the conflict. While children have been killed or injured after being caught in the crossfire between insurgent groups and security forces, “most of the killing and maiming is owed to indiscriminate large scale bomb and suicide attacks by insurgent groups such as Al-Qaida in Iraq and Islamic State of Iraq, who target public areas...where children tend to gather”. Another consistent threat to children is explosive remnants of war, which “continue to claim the lives of children and cause injury long after combat operations have taken place”.¹⁶

c. Rape or other grave sexual violence against children;

Incidents of rape or grave sexual violence against Iraqi children in connection with the armed conflict “are extremely difficult to verify and gathering information on this violation remains

¹³ UK Home Office 2011, *Country of Origin Report – Iraq*, 25 March – Attachment 1

¹⁴ ‘Iraq: A bad place for children’ 2011, *IRIN News*, 4 July <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=93133> – Accessed 8 August 2011 – Attachment 12

¹⁵ United Nations 2011, *Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Iraq*, ReliefWeb, 15 June, pp.5-7 http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_Report_1349.pdf – Accessed 8 August 2011 – Attachment 13

¹⁶ United Nations 2011, *Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Iraq*, ReliefWeb, 15 June, pp.7-8 http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_Report_1349.pdf – Accessed 8 August 2011 – Attachment 13

a consistent challenge”. This is in part due to limitations on access due to the security situation, low incidents of reporting and the absence of effective reporting mechanisms.¹⁷

d. Abduction of children;

In 2009, the Iraqi Government issued a number of warnings after it estimated that at least 265 children had been abducted. Incidents of abductions by insurgent groups remain difficult to verify, “especially because of the clandestine nature of their activities, the lack of reporting and the fact that it is often challenging to distinguish whether the abductors are insurgents or criminals”.¹⁸

e. Attacks on schools or hospitals; and

Children’s access to education has been compromised by the security situation; in 2008, an estimated 2 million primary school-aged children did not attend school largely due to this. Direct attacks against schools continue to occur, and some schools have been the targets of suicide bombers. Some hospitals have been damaged or closed due to military operations, and some have been directly targeted by insurgents.¹⁹

f. Denial of humanitarian access.

Humanitarian access remained problematic in areas affected by conflict. As a result of the conflict, some children lacked adequate access “to basic assistance and services related to water, sanitation, food and health care”. The security situation also affected the ability of humanitarian groups to access children in order to deliver them services.²⁰

In 2010, the International Rescue Committee noted that “[y]ears of violence and instability have taken a toll on Iraq’s children and youth, losing years of safe, quality education and subsequently the opportunity for social advancement and future employment”.²¹ Children of all ages are subject to disappearances, kidnappings, murder and injury from a range of actors. Harm and death suffered by children is well-documented and widespread. In its most recent report on Human Rights Practices, the US Department of State (USDOS) noted that religious minorities and children were often the target of kidnappings in Iraq, the majority of which appeared to be financially motivated. Kidnappers who did not receive a ransom often killed their victims; the majority of these cases, according to police, went unreported.²²

¹⁷ United Nations 2011, *Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Iraq*, ReliefWeb, 15 June, p.9 http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_Report_1349.pdf – Accessed 8 August 2011 – Attachment 13

¹⁸ United Nations 2011, *Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Iraq*, ReliefWeb, 15 June, p.9 http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_Report_1349.pdf – Accessed 8 August 2011 – Attachment 13

¹⁹ United Nations 2011, *Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Iraq*, ReliefWeb, 15 June, p.10 http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_Report_1349.pdf – Accessed 8 August 2011 – Attachment 13

²⁰ United Nations 2011, *Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Iraq*, ReliefWeb, 15 June, pp.5-11 http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_Report_1349.pdf – Accessed 8 August 2011 – Attachment 13

²¹ International Rescue Committee 2010, *Annual Report 2010 – Iraq Country Program*, Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit website <http://www.iauiraq.org/documents/1317/Repor.pdf> – Accessed 29 July 2011 – Attachment 14

²² US Department of State 2011, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2010 – Iraq*, 8 April, Section 1.b – Attachment 15

According to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), a 2007 survey claimed that an estimated 9 per cent of deaths and injuries to Iraqi children were caused by land mines, explosives and unexploded ordinances. Casualties from failed cluster submunitions alone reportedly rose from 5,500 to 80,000 between 1991 and 2007. The majority of recent victims were children, 45.7 per cent aged between 15 and 29 years of age, and 23.9 per cent under the age of 14. UNAMI said that the children of Iraq continue to “suffer tremendously”, and quoted a spokesperson from the UNICEF Iraq Office, who said that “Iraqi children have the right to grow up in a safe environment without risk to their well being and lives as much as any other child in the world”.²³

Babel

In June 2011, security forces in Babel freed a child three hours after she had been kidnapped from the centre of Hilla. After her family reported the kidnapping, police surrounded the area, forcing the kidnapers to abandon her and flee. Police continued to search for the kidnapers.²⁴ Two children were wounded in the north of Babel in January 2011. The children were reportedly playing with an unexploded bomb near their house in the al-Askandariya region in northern Hilla when it detonated.²⁵ In November 2010, police found the body of a child who had been kidnapped three days earlier in Babel. The body was found in the Hajj canal, about five kilometres north of Hilla city.²⁶

According to *Aswat al-Iraq*, in December 2010 a child was wounded and his parents killed in a bomb explosion in northern Babel; an improvised explosive device (IED) detonated near a house in the Ajbela region northeast of Hilla, killing the owner and his wife, injuring their son and damaging the house.²⁷ In September 2010, two boys were killed when a grenade with which they had been playing exploded inside their house in Hilla. The boys’ parents – both university professors – reportedly kept the grenade at home for personal protection.²⁸

Wassit

²³ United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq 2009, *UNAMI Focus – Voice of the Mission*, No 34, UN Iraq website, June <http://www.uniraq.org/FileLib/misc/FocusJun09EN.pdf> – Accessed 29 July 2011 – Attachment 16

²⁴ ‘Kidnapped child released in Hilla’ 2011, *Aswat al-Iraq*, 11 June http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=143090&l=1 – Accessed 29 July 2011 – Attachment 17

²⁵ ‘2 children wounded as bomb explodes north of Babel’ 2011, *Aswat al-Iraq*, 17 January http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=140586&l=1 – Accessed 29 July – Attachment 18

²⁶ ‘Child found dead 3 days after he was kidnapped in Babel’ 2010, *Aswat al-Iraq*, 4 November http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=138648&l=1 – Accessed 29 July 2011 – Attachment 19

²⁷ ‘Man, wife killed, son wounded in Hilla’ 2010, *Aswat al-Iraq*, 13 December http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=139752&l=1 – Accessed 29 July 2011 – Attachment 20

²⁸ ‘2 boys killed in grenade blast in Hilla’ 2010, *Aswat al-Iraq*, 6 September http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=136559&l=1 – Accessed 29 July 2011 – Attachment 21

A woman and her daughter were injured in May 2011 by an IED attack against a US Army patrol in Kut. The woman and her daughter happened to be close to the vicinity of the blast.²⁹ In April 2010, four members of a family were killed by an armed group in northern Wassit; a group of gunmen reportedly attacked a house north of Kut, and killed a man, a woman and their two daughters.³⁰ An *Aswat al-Iraq* report from July 2010 stated that the body of an unidentified child had been salvaged from a river in central Kut. The boy was thought to be 12 years old, and was taken out of the Tigris River.³¹

In February 2010, a woman and child were killed and 11 people were wounded in a tribal conflict in the south of Kut. The conflict occurred between the al-Shahman and al-Gharieb tribes in the al-Hay district.³² Police freed an abducted child less than an hour after he had been kidnapped in Kut in December 2009, following the arrest of a three-member gang.³³ Also in December 2009, the body of a young girl was retrieved from the Tigris River and taken to al-Zahraa Hospital morgue. The girl had reportedly been shot in the head.³⁴

In February 2009, there were unconfirmed reports of a spate of murders targeting young girls in the area. Three girls were reportedly found dead in the al-Hawi area of Kut, while another seven were allegedly found dead on the road to Badra, between Kut and Baghdad. Another report claimed that a girl in the al-Zahra district of Kut was strangled with her headscarf.³⁵

²⁹ 'Woman, her daughter, injured in attack on U.S. patrol' 2011, *Aswat al-Iraq*, 17 May
http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=142593&l=1 – Accessed 29 July 2011 – Attachment 22

³⁰ 'Gunmen kills four family members in Wassit' 2010, *Aswat al-Iraq*, 5 April
http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=129715&l=1 – Accessed 29 July 2011 – Attachment 23

³¹ 'Body of child salvaged from river in Kut' 2010, *Aswat al-Iraq*, 24 July
http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=134839&l=1 – Accessed 29 July 2011 – Attachment 24

³² 'Woman, child killed, 11 civilians injured south of Kut' 2010, *Aswat al-Iraq*, 9 February
http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=126740&l=1 – Accessed 29 July 2011 – Attachment 25

³³ 'Kidnapped child freed, abductors nabbed in Kut' 2009, *Aswat al-Iraq*, 6 December
http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=123022&l=1 – Accessed 29 July 2011 – Attachment 26

³⁴ 'Body of young girl salvaged from river in Kut' 2009, *Aswat al-Iraq*, 18 December
http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=123727&l=1 – Accessed 29 July 2011 – Attachment 27

³⁵ "'Girls' Deaths" Are the Talk of Spooked-Out Kut' 2009, IraqSlogger website, 3 February
<http://iraqslogger.powweb.com/index.php/topic/59?PHPSESSID=6307952c3c8f60ccaa208a47a63fd2a0> – Accessed 29 July 2011 – Attachment 28

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11. RRT Country Advice 2011, *Country Advice IRQ38983*, 1 July.
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15. US Department of State 2011, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2010 – Iraq*, 8 April.
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