

Iraq Occupation Focus
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Military news

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Iraqi police and army officers targeted in new wave of violence

The Guardian reports (October 15th): wave of targeted attacks on soldiers, police, traffic officers and senior officials is steadily picking off the custodians of Iraq's streets at rates that are nearing the darkest days of the insurgency, according to security commanders.
710 Iraqis had been killed this year with silenced pistols or rifles. At least 600 more had been killed by magnet bombs placed under the cars of officials, according to Baghdad's Major Crimes Unit. Hundreds more have been injured. The killings have increased sharply in the past four months amid fears that the ongoing failure to form a government in Baghdad is fuelling a worsening security vacuum.

Daily Life

Powerless in Baghdad

WA reports |(October 17th): In the searing heat of the Iraqi summer, the difficulty of life with virtually no electricity is hard to comprehend. But overlay it with the physical and spiritual challenges of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, and the big cities become time-bombs ticking at the feet of government.
Or they would, if there was a government. For seven months now the country has been paralysed by the failure of the political parties to agree on the make-up of a new government in the aftermath of national elections in mid-March. So, with nobody in charge in Baghdad, Iraqis vent their spleen in the streets - being doused by water cannon or arrested and, in some cases, shot by the police.

More journalists killed in Iraq than in 2009: IPI

AFP report (October 5th): More journalists have been killed in Iraq so far this year than in all of 2009, press watchdog IPI said.
Tahrir Kadhim Jawad, a cameraman for the al-Hurra satellite channel, was killed when a magnetic "sticky bomb" attached to his car detonated in the town of Garma, 50 kilometres (30 miles) west of the capital, police in nearby Fallujah said.
"Jawad is the fifth journalist to be killed in Iraq this year, and the third to be killed there in less than a month," the Vienna-based International Press Institute (IPI) said.

UNHCR poll: Iraqi refugees reluctant to return to Iraq permanently

UNHCR report (October 8th): A recent UNHCR survey of Iraqi refugees living in Syria has found that most are still reluctant to return home on a permanent basis. The survey was carried out at the Al Waleed border crossing between Syria and Iraq, in July and August. Of 498 families, representing more than 2000 individuals, 46 percent cited political uncertainty, while 15 percent blamed unstable security conditions. A further 13 percent said they are holding back because of poor educational opportunities, and six percent cited housing shortages.

Iraq's Disappeared

Institute for War and Peace Reporting reports (October 7th): Each day before noon prayers, Sahera Ibrahim lights a candle at the Sunni shrine of Abu Hanifa in the Adhamiya district of east Baghdad to pray for the return of her son.
Ibrahim is among thousands of Iraqis whose loved ones disappeared during the worst days of sectarian warfare between 2005 and 2007. Some were seen picked up by uniformed militias and piled into lorries, others simply seemed to vanish.
Iraq’s minister of human rights Wijdan Mikhail told IWPR that her ministry had received more than 9,000 complaints in 2005 and 2006 alone from Iraqis who said a relative had disappeared. Human rights groups put the total number much higher.

New ‘Green Zone’ emerging in Baghdad

Azzaman reports (October 9th): Baghdad now has another ‘green zone’ in the densely populated neighborhood of Karrada; but this one is for U.S. security guards, the fearsome, and trigger-happy mercenaries hired to protect U.S. officials and interests and kill Iraqis with impunity.
A company recruiting these mercenaries – they are hired to fight for a salary that brushes $25,000 a month – has turned a string of hotels behind the National Theater in Karrada into a no-go area.
The company has blocked streets leading to these hotels and no Iraqi is allowed to enter the area including high ranking government officials without special U.S. permits.

Iraqi police still struggle with insecurity as U.S. departs

McClatchy reports (October 10th): Asked what his men needed to stop the recent surge in rocket and mortar attacks from their area, 1st Sgt. Haitham Ghanem of the 1st Iraqi federal police division launched into a list of complaints.
"We need more experience, more staff. We need new equipment, training and better weapons," Ghanem said through a U.S. military translator, whose expression slowly grew pained.
Ali Azghar, an officer with the 1st federal police division worries that corruption could undermine police work.
"We are willing and prepared," Azghar said. "The obstacle is, what if you catch someone and take him in, and then your supervisor says, 'Oh no, that's my cousin,' or, 'That's my in-law.' And they release him. Your hard work could be diminished by someone higher up."

Christian refugees turning to prostitution to survive

Asia News reports (October 14th): Chaldean Christian refugees from Iraq are turning to prostitution in order to survive in Syria. Fr Farid Botros, head of the Chaldean community in the Syrian capital, is concerned about the trend, which is growing to hitherto unknown levels. “We have about 4,000 Chaldean families from Iraq, some fled with just the clothes on their back with a death threat hanging over them. Under Syrian law, they cannot work. Many do something underground; others, more and more, turn to prostitution,” he said.

Upcoming events

Tues 26 October: Trauma, 'an indelible mark' on the lives of women and children,
Public seminar with two short films and discussion following a talk by Dr. Omar Ahmed, a Consultant Psychiatrist. 18:30 - 21:30, Pirate Castle, Oval Road, London, NW1 7EA.
Public Meeting organised by Women Solidarity for an Independent and Unified Iraq
Sat 30 October 10.00am - 5.30pm Stop the War Coalition Annual National Conference,
Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL (Tube: Holborn).