



## Weekly Iraq .Xplored report

19 January 2019

Prepared by Risk Analysis Team, Iraq

[garda.com](http://garda.com)



Confidential and proprietary © GardaWorld



**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

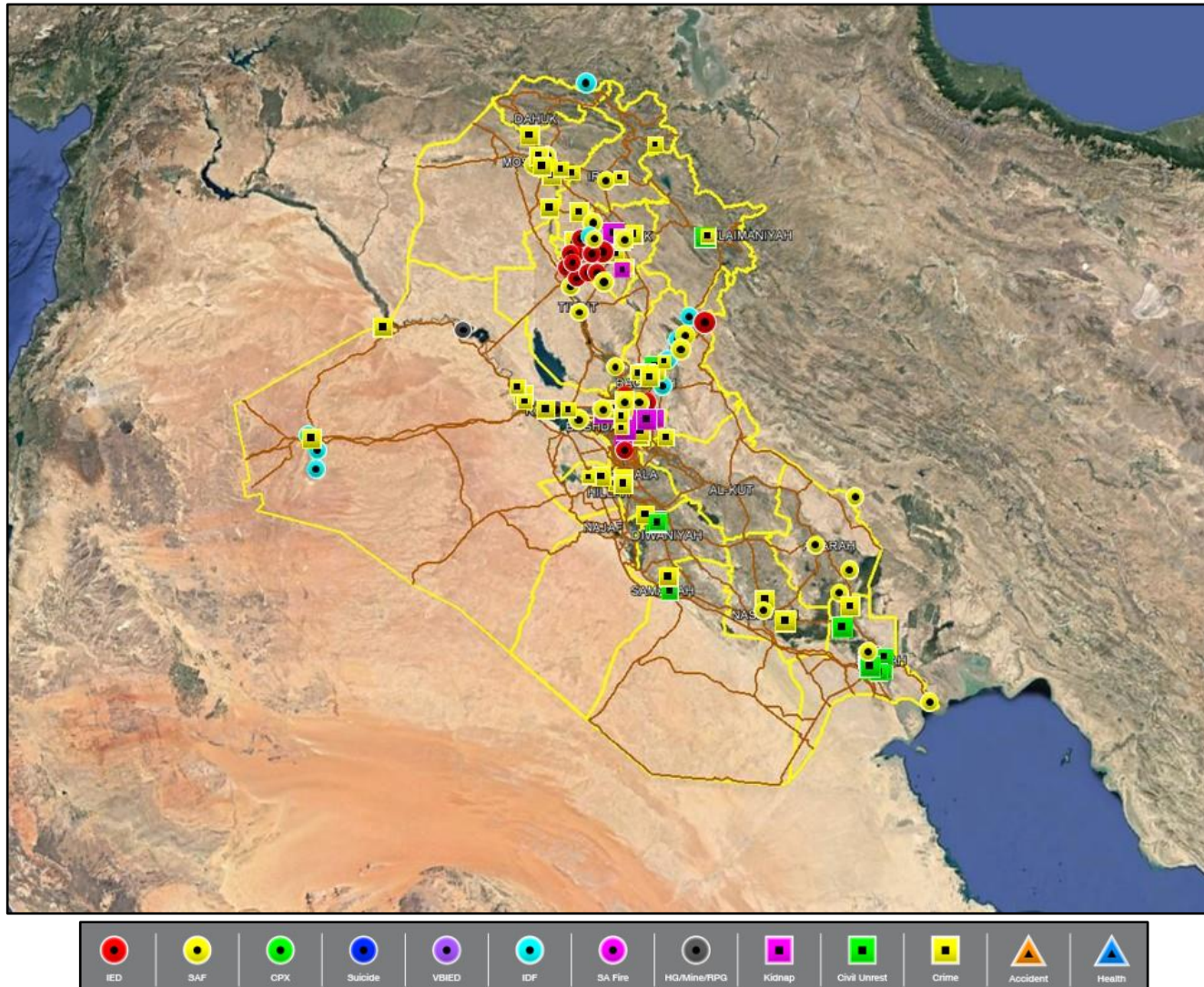
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ACTIVITY MAP</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>OUTLOOK</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Short term outlook</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Medium to long term outlook</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>SIGNIFICANT EVENTS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>IHEC sets date for provincial elections</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Iraqi Government formation process may be delayed until Spring</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Minister of Electricity accused of dismissals on a sectarian basis</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>THREAT MATRIX</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>OVERVIEW</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Political</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Security</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Economy</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>WEEKLY OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Countrywide Military/Security Situation</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>ACRONYM LIST</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>GARDAWORLD INFORMATION SERVICES</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>GARDAWORLD</b>	<b>20</b>

This report is an abridged version of GardaWorld Weekly Iraq .Xplored January 19, 2019. To subscribe to the full versions of the daily/weekly Iraq .Xplored reports, or for enquires relating to other GardaWorld services, please contact [daniel.matthews@garda.com](mailto:daniel.matthews@garda.com)

**Disclaimer:** The information and opinions expressed in this Report are the views of GardaWorld and constitute a judgment as at the date of the Report and are subject to change without notice. The information and opinions expressed in this Report have been formed in good faith on the basis of the best information and intelligence available at the time of writing, but no representation or warranty, express or implied, is made as to its accuracy, completeness or correctness. GardaWorld accepts no liability arising out of or in connection with the comments made or the information set out in this Report and the reader is advised that any decision taken to act or not to act in reliance on this Report is taken solely at the reader's own risk. In particular, the comments in this Report should not be construed as advice, legal or otherwise.

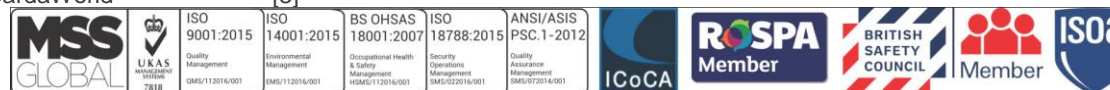


## ACTIVITY MAP



Confidential and proprietary © GardaWorld

[3]



[garda.com/ips](http://garda.com/ips)

**OUTLOOK****Short term outlook**

- Rocket attacks directed at the International Zone and assessed to target the US Embassy in response to President Trump's visit, highlight elevated anti-US sentiments and willingness from pro-Iranian factions to target US interests in the country. This is not unprecedented or unexpected, and absent a significant escalation in anti-US hostilities it is unlikely to affect commercial operations on the ground. The GoI's response also highlight that US-Iraqi relations remain driven by pragmatic recognition of the necessity of continued western military and commercial support which is unlikely to change.
- The International zone remains open for public access during limited hours until further notice. On January 03 Prime Minister Mahdi announced another extension to the International Zone opening hours from 17:00hrs to 09:00hrs. On December 16, the US Embassy issued a security alert stating it has initiated "security protocols similar to those used throughout Baghdad during the IZ's open hours." Actions to take listed in the alert included to "keep a low profile, be aware of surroundings and use caution while transiting the IZ".
- Political tensions remain high in Basra following a number of protests in Basra City. On January 18, 2019, the latest in a series of demonstrations calling for the dismissal of the Governor was dispersed by ISF using tear gas. Further protest activity, with an associated risk of violence, can be expected in Basra City in the short term as long as political tensions remain high.
- IS activity is expected to remain high in the northern provinces, including Nineveh, Kirkuk and Diyala province, especially in the rural areas. The group is likely to continue its asymmetric campaign through hit and run attacks, targeted assassination and terrorism to challenge ISF control in these areas. While the group is assessed to retain intent to stage attacks in Baghdad and the southern provinces, its capability in restricted as evidenced by a continuing decline in high-profile attacks in these areas.
- Political focus now remains on the four Cabinet of Minister positions that remain unresolved, including those of the Defence and Interior Ministers. Opposition from Moqtada Al-Sadr's Sairoun alliance to the selection of partisan figures for the remaining posts means that there is an associated risk of demonstrations as tensions remain high, especially in Baghdad. Upcoming 2019 fiscal year budget discussions can also be expected to drive protest activity in Baghdad and the southern provinces.

**Medium to long term outlook**

- Sectarian violence can be expected to continue in areas of Northern Iraq which remain permissive to IS operations, including Nineveh, Salah al-Din, Diyala and southwestern Kirkuk. Attacks will continue to target security checkpoints and outpost, especially in Sunni dominated areas controlled by Shia dominated security forces.
- Islamic State activity will continue to dominate security reporting with focus on the potential resurgence of an insurgent campaign in northern and western Iraq. Despite ongoing ISF efforts to clear remaining IS pockets, the group retains a degree of freedom of movement in the desert regions of Anbar, near the Syrian border, and along the Hamrin Mountains.
- Low-level incidents related to criminality, personal disputes and tribal tensions are likely to continue in Basra and the southern region. Long-term tensions are also expected to be driven by the return of militia factions expecting material and social rewards for their contribution in the campaign against IS.

## SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

**IHEC sets date for provincial elections**

The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) on January 13 set a new date for local council elections. According to a statement by the Office of the First Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Hassan Karim al-Kaabi, issued after a meeting between the Parliamentary Legal Committee and the IHEC, the November 16, 2019 has now been set for the new date for the provincial elections across Iraq. He added that the IHEC called on the federal government to make the necessary preparations for the November elections. Provincial elections should have been held in April 2018 but were subsequently postponed until late December 2018. In November last year the elections were postponed indefinitely due to the requisite funding and preparation not being in place

**Iraqi Government formation process may be delayed until Spring**

Reports are emerging that the government formation process is not likely to be completed any time soon, with parliamentary sources indicating that Prime Minister Adil Abd al-Mahdi has still not made much progress on achieving a consensus with the other political factions on the issue. According to media reports, the process will likely be delayed until Spring.

**Minister of Electricity accused of dismissals on a sectarian basis**

The Minister of Electricity, Luay al-Khateeb, has come under fire for supposedly making sectarian dismissals and appointments in his ministry. Mohammed al-Karbouli, a Sunni MP and a member of al-Hal party, criticised Khateeb in a tweet saying, "the Minister of Electricity starts his journey of sacking exclusively Sunni cadres and experts. We will never accept discrimination between Iraqis". He also added that he doubted the appointments were made for the purpose of "reform and change" as the individuals recently appointed have a history of corruption.

## THREAT MATRIX

Region	Political	Terrorism	Militancy	Crime	K&R
KRG*	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Low	Low
North**	Moderate	High-Extreme	High	High	High
Baghdad	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Anbar	Moderate	High	High	High	High
South***	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

Threat Scale	Minimal	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme
--------------	---------	-----	----------	------	---------

\* **KRG** – Dohuk, Erbil & Sulaymaniyah

\*\* **North** – Nineveh, Salah ad-Din, Kirkuk & Diyala

\*\*\* **South** – Babil, Wasit, Karbala, Najaf, Diwaniyah, Dhi Qar, Muthanna, Maysan & Basra



## OVERVIEW

## Political

**IHEC sets date for provincial elections**

The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) on January 13 set a new date for local council elections. According to a statement by the Office of the First Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Hassan Karim al-Kaabi, issued after a meeting between the Parliamentary Legal Committee and the IHEC, the November 16, 2019 has now been set for the new date for the provincial elections across Iraq. He added that the IHEC called on the federal government to make the necessary preparations for the November elections. The IHEC had announced on January 12 that the most appropriate date for holding provincial elections was November 09. Provincial elections should have been held in April 2018 but were subsequently postponed until late December 2018. In November last year the elections were postponed indefinitely due to the requisite funding and preparation not being in place.

**Iraqi Government formation process may be delayed until Spring**

Reports are emerging that the government formation process is not likely to be completed any time soon, with parliamentary sources indicating that Prime Minister Adil Abd al-Mahdi has still not made much progress on achieving a consensus with the other political factions on the issue. According to media reports, the process will likely be delayed until Spring. The newspaper Al Hayat quoted a senior Member of Parliament (MP) for the Bina bloc, Sana' al-Mousawi, saying that "the political forces have not found any solutions regarding the candidates for the three vacant portfolios". He claims that this has caused major disruptions to parliamentary sessions as well as the passing of the budget for this bill. He suggested that there is speculation that the final vote to approve the candidates for the remaining ministerial positions will take place at the start of the next legislative term in Spring. It is hoped that this delay would give the various parties enough time to find a solution and reach a consensus over the appropriate nominees for the posts. This will also give time for the Iraqi Parliament to pass the crucial budget, which has been delayed considerably. Therefore, it is likely that the work of parliament, which for months has been dominated by the formation of the government, will be focused on the budget instead.

**Minister of Electricity accused of dismissals on a sectarian basis**

The Minister of Electricity, Luay al-Khateeb, has come under fire for supposedly making sectarian dismissals and appointments in his ministry. Mohammed al-Karbouli, a Sunni MP and a member of al-Hal party, criticised Khateeb in a tweet saying, "the Minister of Electricity starts his journey of sacking exclusively Sunni cadres and experts. We will never accept discrimination between Iraqis". He also added that he doubted the appointments were made for the purpose of "reform and change" as the individuals recently appointed have a history of corruption. Khateeb responded to the accusations, saying that he "replaced two Muslim affiliates with a more competent Muslim and another Christian purely based on professional criteria". The issue is yet to be picked up by other MPs and officials in Iraq.

**Kurdistan government says cooperating with Baghdad on budget**

The cabinet of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has held a meeting on January 14 to discuss the region's share of Iraq's budget for 2019 and agreed to "cooperate" with the federal government in Baghdad on the matter, according to a statement on the KRG website on the same day. The federal budget has been the cause of strained relations between Erbil and Baghdad for many years, as it has been tied to the thorny issue of independent oil sales by the Kurdistan Region. At present, the main bone of contention is the size of the Kurdish share, which stands at 12.67 per cent in the current budget bill, and the handover of oil sales. At the meeting, the statement said, the KRG's Finance and Economy Minister Rebaz Hamlan presented a report about the bill and discussed attempts to secure the region's "financial rights and dues". The cabinet tasked its Finance Ministry to coordinate with its counterpart in Baghdad and the Iraqi parliament's finance committee to "reach an outcome that protects the region's rights". The statement concluded by saying that the KRG "has also reiterated the region's commitment to cooperate and coordinate with the federal government and the Iraqi government in this regard". It was not clear from the statement what this would mean in practice, in terms of the 12.67 per cent and the handover of oil. The

KRG had thus far demanded its share to be restored to its previous level of 17 per cent. The statement added that the KRG's Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, who chaired the meeting, reiterated hopes that 2019 would see an end to financial challenges and improve livelihoods.

Meanwhile, in a statement on 16 January, Parliamentary Finance Committee member Mahasen Hamdoun said that the national budget law for 2019 FY will be finalized and will be submitted to the Parliament within ten days. She added that the finance committee still is still discussing the budget with the relevant governmental committees, adding that so far, no decision has been taken to change the articles of the budget law. Hamdoun added that the finance committee has looked at the budget allocation to the ministries, but that the exact allocations have as yet not been finalised. Concerning the oil price per barrel quoted in the 2019 budget, Hamdoun said it still remains set at \$56 per barrel, adding that it cannot be changed as all the budget calculations have been based on this price. In a separate report, Parliamentary Finance Committee member Ahmed al-Saffar announced that the drafting of amendments to the budget will be finalised over the coming week, it will then be submitted to the Council of Representatives (CoR) for discussion, before being voted on.

### Iran urges region not to 'bet on wrong horse' amid Pompeo's Mid East tour

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has called on regional countries not to "bet on the wrong horse" amid heightened tension between Tehran and Washington. Upon his arrival in Baghdad for a five-day visit, Zarif addressed reporters and said Iran faced some troubles by the US government which he said hindered the relations with Iraq. "Such activities stem from America's failed diplomacy. Such failures have carried on for 40 years. I urge the [regional] countries never place their bet on the wrong horse," Zarif told reporters. His remarks came after US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made an unannounced visit to the country, as part of his Middle East tour, and met with senior Iraqi officials. According to Fars news agency, the veteran Iranian diplomat praised the close and historic Tehran-Baghdad ties and said Iran would stand by the people of Iraq. Zarif, who heads a political and economic delegation, highlighted the crucial role of Iran's private sector in reconstructing Iraq in the past years. "The private sector has faced some problems in the past months, particularly following the attacks by Daesh [Islamic State group] in Iraq. Some of the problems were technical and in other areas we also faced some trouble by the Americans. We hope to resolve the problems through consultations of both sides." About his plans, Zarif said he would visit the holy shrines in the cities of Najaf and Karbala, where he would also chair a joint economic forum. He is also scheduled to visit Erbil and Sulaymaniyah in the Iraqi Kurdistan region. The foreign minister also said that this is his first visit after Iraq's elections and that this trip would pave the way for President Hassan Rouhani's future visit to the country. In addition, Zarif stated said that Iran and Iraq will not allow any foreign country to interfere in their bilateral relations, official IRNA news agency reported on January 13. "The relations between Iran and Iraq are not harmful to anyone and, therefore, we will not allow anyone to interfere in it," he was quoted as saying. During his visit, Zarif will meet Iraqi President Barham Salih, Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi and Parliament Speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi. He will also visit the holy Iraqi city of Karbala, and Sulaymaniyah in Iraq's Kurdistan region.

### Iraqi Kurds receive French, Iranian foreign ministers in Erbil

French and Iranian foreign ministers separately arrived in Iraqi Kurdistan's capital of Erbil and held talks with senior officials of the autonomous Kurdish region, Iraqi Kurdish media outlets reported on January 15. French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian arrived overnight and met Iraqi Kurdistan Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and key leaders of the prime minister's governing Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the Iraqi Kurdish party's official news website said. The French foreign minister reiterated France's support for the Kurds politically, militarily and economically, it added. Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also met senior Kurdish officials after he arrived at the region's capital in the morning of January 15. The KDP-affiliated TV showed the Kurdish prime minister warmly receiving the senior Iranian government delegation headed by Zarif at the Erbil International Airport. The Iranian foreign minister is scheduled to also meet senior officials of the Erbil Chamber of Commerce, the TV said. It added that the autonomous Kurdistan region is strategically and economically important for Iran and Tehran-Erbil trade exchange stands at some 7bn US dollars. "Kurdistan region cannot and shall not be an enemy of Iran," Rudaw TV's news editor Hemin Abdullah said in an opinion piece published on the TV's website on the same day, although he accused Tehran of playing "divide and rule" between the two key Iraqi Kurdish

parties. The Tehran delegation will later on today head to the Sulaymaniyah province to meet senior officials of the second largest Kurdish party in Iraq, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the Kurdish TV's presenter Sangar Rahman said in a separate report broadcast live from the Erbil airport. Iraqi Kurdistan government Spokesman Safin Dizayee on January 14 and 15 tweeted photos showing the French and Iranian foreign ministers at meeting with the KRG prime minister in Erbil.

## Security

### Fallout from recent AAH / Hikma dispute in Baghdad

Two prominent Iraqi Shia factions have exchanged accusations over the murder of a Baghdad shop-owner, prompting the media authorities to urge for calm. Media outlets belonging to the Shia Al-Hikmah (Wisdom) movement, led by Shia cleric Ammar al-Hakim, has reported that the killer of the owner of the east Baghdad restaurant belongs to the Iran-backed Asaib Ahl al-Haq group, which is affiliated to the Shia-dominated Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF). Asaib Ahl al-Haq (League of the Righteous) denied the accusations on its media outlets, vowing to sue the Wisdom-affiliated outlets, the Kurdish news website Rudaw reported on January 11. Iraq's Communication and Media Commission (CMC), the state-owned media regulator, urged both parties to "refrain from libel and the exchange of accusations", in a statement reported by the website of the privately-owned Al-Sumaria TV on January 12.

### Another Baghdad murder crime

An unidentified assailant drove past east Baghdad's Sadr neighbourhood on a motorbike on January 10, shooting and killing Emad Jabbar, the owner of the renowned Laymouna restaurant. The murder closely followed the death of Al-Hurra TV journalist Samer Ali, whose body was found in the vicinity of the network's Baghdad headquarters, with a gunshot to his head. The murders are the latest in a string of similar cases which have targeted celebrities and activists in Baghdad and Basra, with no links or explanations whatsoever. However, this time, the Hakim-affiliated Al-Forat TV reported that Jabbar's murderer was arrested and found to be in possession of badges belonging to Asaib Ahl al-Haq, citing local news agencies. Its website cited a security source as saying that the attack was "criminal and not terrorist". Mohamed al-Husseini, a Wisdom official, told Rudaw that the murderer, who claimed to belong to Asaib Ahl al-Haq, threatened Jabbar, demanding ransom. He added that Jabbar was killed after he had refused to pay such ransom.

### Shia-Shia confrontation

Al-Forat's report unleashed a media war between the two Shia groups, with their media outlets exchanging threats and accusations. Later in the day, the Asaib-affiliated Al-Ahd TV quoted the interior ministry spokesman as denying that the murderer was arrested while in possession of the group's badges. He added that the murderer was yet to be arrested. The statements were shortly followed by a strong-worded condemnation from Shia cleric Qais al-Khazali, Asaib Ahl al-Haq commander, on Twitter. "The lowest a man can stoop is by wrongly accusing others [of crimes] just because they disagree with him, unless he was paid to do that, then he could be forgiven for being [merely] an infiltrator," Khazali said. In turn, Al-Forat reported on its website that Asaib Ahl al-Haq was pressuring security authorities to release Jabbar's murderer, citing "informed sources". Safaa al-Aasam, a political analyst and security expert, told Shafaq News on January 12 that the exchange of media accusations is dangerous, as it could seep into Iraq's streets. He warned that both movements have military wings and therefore such a confrontation could be grave.

### Corruption accusations

Meanwhile, Wisdom's Hussein told Rudaw that the confrontation with Asaib Ahl al-Haq emerged after parliamentary accusations to the latter over involvement in robbing the country's largest oil refinery in Baiji in Salahuddin province, north of Baghdad, while freeing it from Islamic State militants in October 2015. MP Muthanna al-Sammarraie, who represents Salahuddin province, urged authorities to reopen an investigation into the robbery of equipment from the oil refinery. He accused Asaib Ahl al-Haq of stealing the equipment, alongside other Shia militias, the Sunni-leaning news website The Baghdad Post reported on January 07. Sammarraie is a member of the Al-Wataniya (Patriotic) alliance, which is an ally of the Wisdom movement. He said the former Salahuddin



governor had opened an investigation into the robbery, yet it was closed due to "political disagreements and pressure from Iran". Asaib Ahl al-Haq official Mahmoud al-Rubaiei also told Rudaw that his group was being targeted for insisting on addressing issues of corruption in the country. Rudaw stressed the significance of the Wisdom movement's confrontation with Asaib Ahl al-Haq, saying that the two Shia groups have long been allies.

### *Dispute in parliament*

The row between the two factions reveals another side of a larger Shia-Shia dispute in parliament. The Asaib Ahl al-Haq is represented in parliament by Sadeqoun, which is part of a larger parliamentary coalition called Al-Binaa (Construction). The Wisdom is part of another coalition called Al-Islah (Reform). Both coalitions, the largest in parliament, have been at loggerheads for months over the former's candidate for the interior minister post, Faleh al-Fayyad, the country's national security advisor and head of the PMF. The parliament partially approved Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi's cabinet in October. Four ministerial posts, including the interior and defence, are yet to be appointed.

### **PM denies reports on disbanding Iraqi militias**

Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi has denied reports that the US asked his government to "disband and disarm" Shia-dominated militias. The prime minister described the reports as "untrue", the Pro-Kurdish Shafaq News website reported on 15 January, adding that Mahdi said it was "a completely Iraqi affair". Earlier in the day, Pan-Arab Saudi-funded Al-Arabiya TV said that the US administration has handed a list of militias to the Iraqi government and asked they be disbanded and disarmed, adding that Mahdi asked for an "ultimatum" to reply to the request. Mahdi also denied reports on an increase in the number of foreign troops in the country. State-run Iraqia News TV quoted the prime minister as saying that such reports were "incorrect". Speaking during his weekly news conference, the prime minister further cited "changes" in foreign relations with world countries, according to the channel. Shafaq News also quoted Mahdi as saying that "there is a growing interest [from world countries] regarding Iraq", adding that the country will take part in the economic summit to be held in Lebanon next week.

### **Warnings of possible renewed IS campaign**

Following the latest car bomb in al-Qaim on January 11, Iraq's three top parliamentary officials warned of the danger of Islamic State sleeper cells attempting to reignite violence. The three speakers of the Council of Representatives (CoR) released a series of statements following Saturday's parliamentary session. Parliament Speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi called the repeated terrorist bombings in areas liberated from ISIS a "dangerous indicator" of a potential resurgence of the group. First Deputy Speaker Has-san al-Kaabi called on Iraqis to "not tolerate in any way the terrorist sleeper cells that are trying to instil terror in families" and "restart the cycle of violence that has plagued the nation for decades. Second Deputy Speaker Bashir Haddad called for "strict security measures to protect the lives of citizens and their property".

### **Erbil, Baghdad initially agreed on Peshmerga return to disputed areas**

Single source press reporting stated that the Kurdistan Region's Peshmerga Ministry and Iraq's Ministry of Defence have initially agreed on the return of the Kurdish forces to the disputed territories. Since October 16, 2017, when the Iraqi army and Iranian-backed militias of Hashd al-Shaabi moved into Kirkuk, pushing the Peshmerga forces out, the disputed territories have been under the rule of the Iraqi government. Secretary General of the Peshmerga Ministry, Jabbar Yawar, told BasNews on January 13 that they are expecting a delegation from Iraqi Defence Ministry now to hold detailed talks on a mechanism to allow the Peshmerga forces return to the disputed territories. "Initially we have agreed on the return [of Peshmerga forces] and joint military and security work across all the areas where IS is still active," Yawar explained. "It includes areas from Khanaqin to Sinjar, those in Diyala, Salah-al-Din, Kirkuk, and Mosul provinces."

## **Economy**

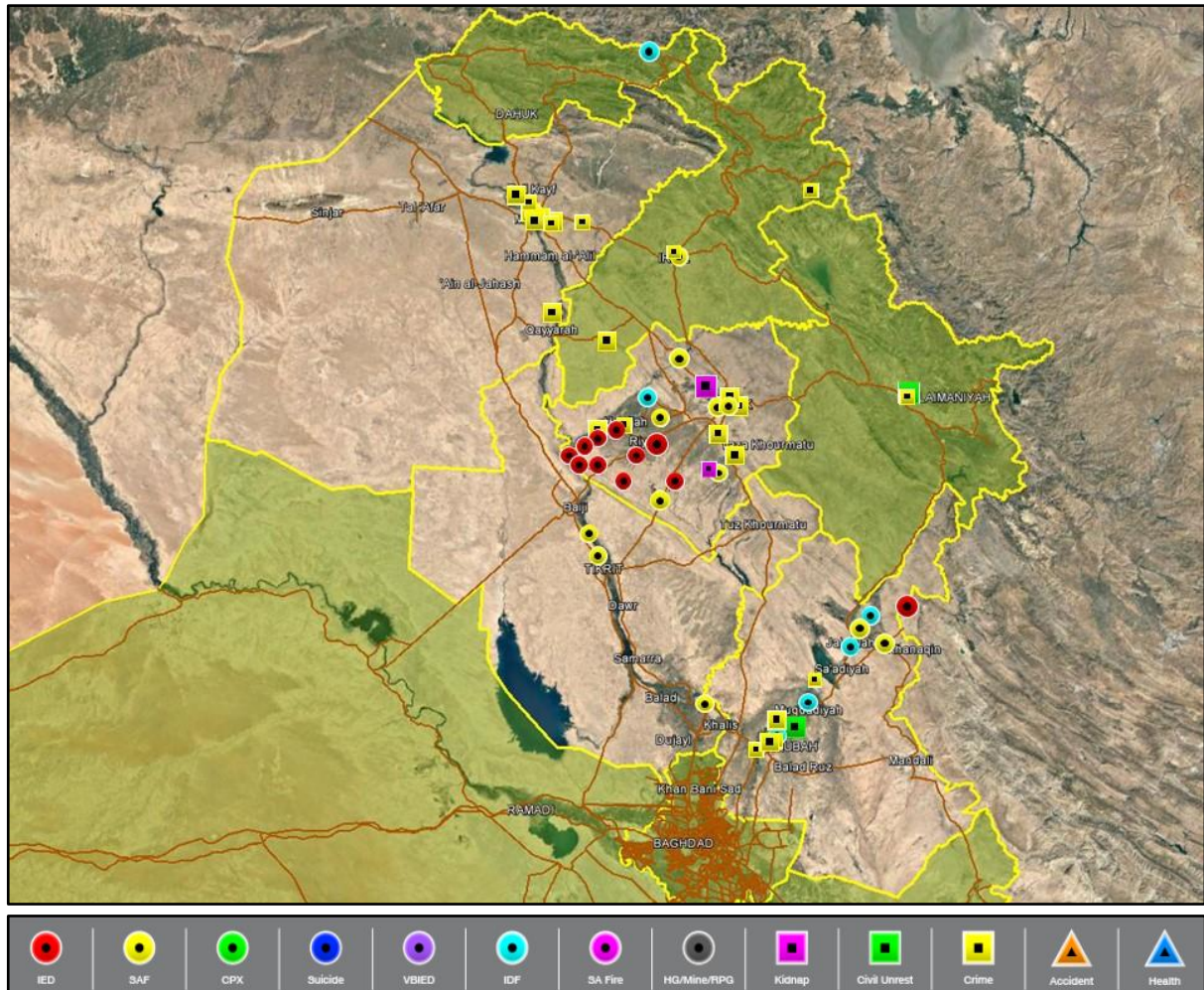
### **Turkey to resume flights to Iraqi Kurdistan's Sulaymaniyah**

Turkey has decided to resume flights to and from Iraqi Kurdistan Region's Sulaymaniyah International Airport, according to the airport director Tahir Abdulla on January 14. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan website PUK-media

reported Abdulla as saying that a delegation of the Turkish Airlines had visited the airport and decided to "resume flights on January 24". He said that there would initially be seven flights between the airport and Turkish airports and that the situation would gradually be normalised.

### **30,000 barrels of oil 'looted' daily from Kirkuk, smuggled to Iraqi Kurdistan: PUK official**

Some 30,000 barrels per day (bpd) of oil are being looted from Kirkuk and smuggled into Sulaymaniyah in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, a top Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) official claimed on January 13. In a Facebook post, PUK executive council chief Mala Bakhtiar said: "According to information provided (and not refuted yet), some 30,000 barrels of oil from Jambour oil fields in Taza town in Kirkuk are looted via tankers belonging to certain officials". Tankers carrying the "looted oil" are "queuing all the way from Kirkuk to Sulaymaniyah and they will be sold based on special deals," Bakhtiar said. "Embezzlement, corruption, and fraud have become a dangerous triangle in Iraq," and this triangle can only be achieved by high ranking officials who wield immense governing authority in politics and the military forces", he added.

**WEEKLY OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT****Countrywide Military/Security Situation****Northern Provinces**

Turkish air strikes have continued over the reporting period targeting a number of villages in Dohuk and Erbil provinces including the Zap and Sinat-Haftanin regions. In an unusual statement, the PKK claimed that the strikes had not caused any casualties within their ranks.

Elsewhere in the KR-I, the Kurdistan Region's Counter-Terrorism service this week announced it had arrested two "terrorists" belonging to Islamic State in the capital of Erbil. The Counter-Terrorism General-Directorate of the Kurdistan Region's Security Council (KRSC) stated they had carried out an operation to arrest the two members of the jihadist group after receiving credible information and monitoring their actions for a period of time. The names of the jihadists are Ahmed Ibrahim Ahmed Jadi' and Qahtan Ali Ahmed Jadi', who had previously operated as security members with the Islamic State in areas it controlled, according to the Counter-Terrorism service's statement. The directorate also revealed that six more people suspected of being involved in terrorist activities in the country had been arrested in the same operation and that legal measures would be taken against them. It was later reported that PUK-affiliated Kurdish security Assayish arrested an IS member, known as Abu Ubaidah in a village in Chamchamal district, west of Sulaymaniyah on January 14.



In Nineveh province this week, IS militants reportedly killed a village chief on January 12 according to a police source. The victim was the chief of Haramat village in western countryside near Mosul. Meanwhile, single source, uncorroborated press speculation has stated that the United States army is stationing its troops withdrawn from Syria near Mosul Dam in Iraq's northern province of Nineveh. The first batch of US military equipment has arrived in the area in the recent days, an unnamed source told Baghdad Post. Last week, AFP cited a source as saying that the US is withdrawing only unnecessary equipment from Syria at this stage, and that no troops were pulled out. Contradictory reports claimed in the past few weeks that the US forces are being relocated to Iraq, some in the western province of Anbar while others said in Kirkuk's K1 base. In December last year, US President Donald Trump claimed that his country's mission to defeat the Islamic State (IS) had already been accomplished, and that his country's troops were leaving Syria. Mosul Dam is now under the control of the Iraqi army and during the Mosul battle, the dam was protected by Kurdish Peshmerga forces. According to previous reports, Italian troops are stationed at the facility where an Italian construction company is carrying out maintenance on the dam.

Islamic-state driven activity has continued this week in Salah-al-Din. On January 12, a civilian was reportedly killed and seven others including a woman were wounded when suspected IS militants in military uniform staged a SAF attack on a house in Yathrib sub-district of Balad. ISF also recovered the bodies of two shepherds exhibiting gunshot wounds to the head and chest near Tikrit University a few hours after their abduction by IS militants in al-Qadisiyah neighbourhood. Meanwhile, local media reported that several IS militants riding in two pickup trucks staged a SAF attack on the Aqwas checkpoint, north of Tikrit, resulting in five ISF members including one Sunni tribesmen killed. Finally, the house of a Kurdish family in Tuz Khurmatu was destroyed by an IED by unknown perpetrators on the night of January 16. The building was empty at the time and no casualties were reported.

In Kirkuk, the reporting period has seen continued IS activity, particularly in its former stronghold of Hawijah. On January 13, suspected IS militants reportedly detonated multiple explosive devices on the house of a civilian in the village of Hawaeij in the al-Abbasi sub-district of Hawijah, reportedly due to his alleged collaboration with Iraqi security forces. No casualties were reported. Meanwhile, the continued threat from the insurgent grouping has also been evident in Makhmour. Although technically within the disputed areas in Erbil province, IS are known to use the region from which to launch attacks into Kirkuk province itself. This week, PUK spokesman Ghayath al-Sorachi stated on January 12 that "hundreds" of IS militants are still hiding in Mount Qarachux in Makhmour district. Al-Sorachi said in a statement to al-Maaloumah news agency that "approximately 400 terrorists are hiding in Mount Qarachux in Makhmour, Nineveh province. He added that "the residents of the area and the villages surrounding Mount Qarachux in Makhmour are concerned about these movements as these groups carried out a number of terrorist attacks against civilians and called on the Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, Adel Abdul Mahdi, "to carry out large-scale military operations to eliminate those groups".

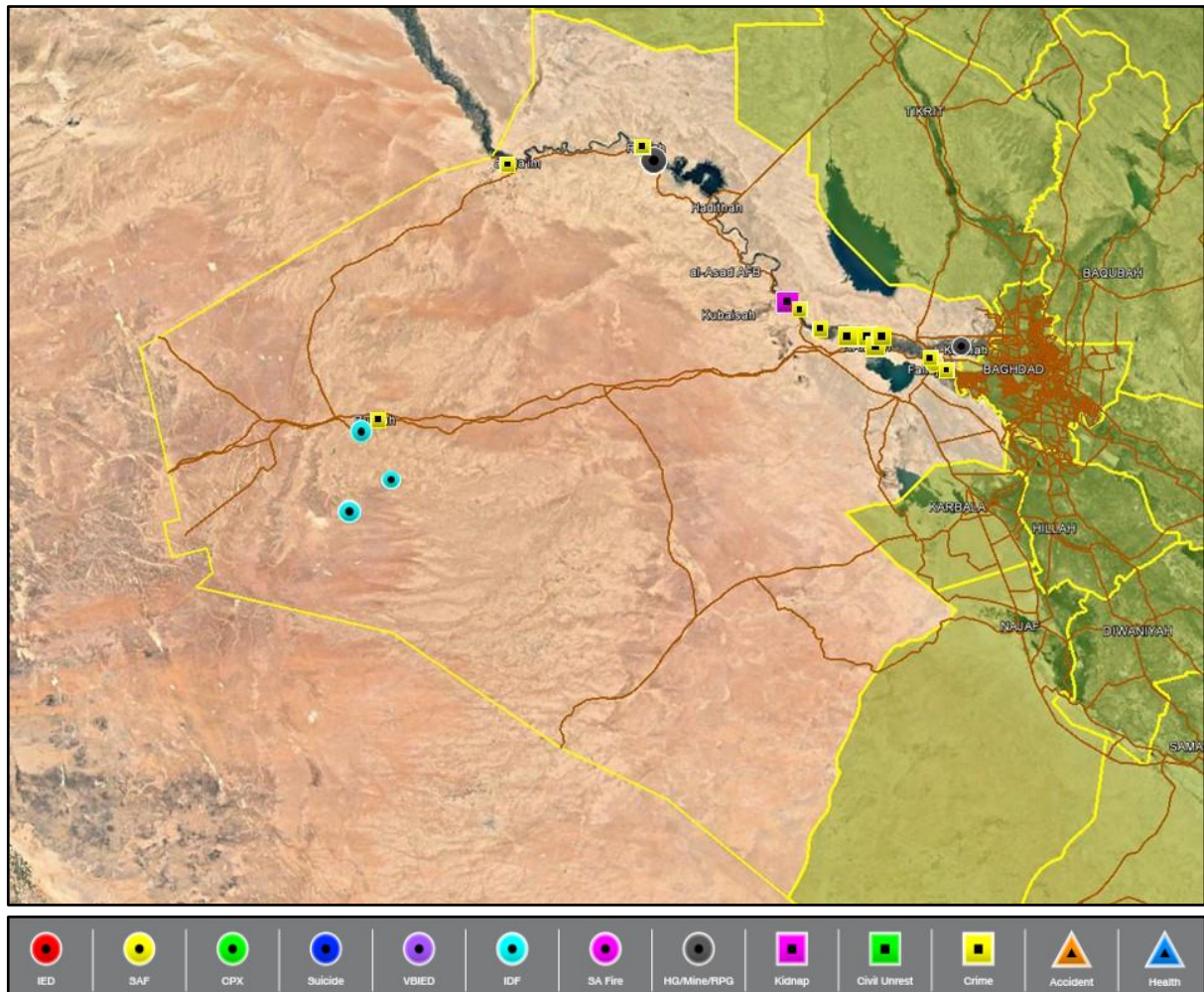
On January 13, a member of the PMU's 16th Bde (Badr) was reportedly killed when IS militants attacked a PMU checkpoint near the District courthouse in the neighbourhood of Brayati, Dibis district, north of Kirkuk. A woman was also killed, and her two children wounded in a roadside IED explosion in al-the Abbasi sub-district of Hawijah and a further two separate roadside IED strikes were recorded on January 14, targeting ISF and civilian vehicles in Khirbet Aziz and Tal al-Dahab villages in Hawijah district respectively. Meanwhile, unconfirmed reports stated that a force of the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) clashed with a group of gunmen, allegedly affiliated with the PMF Turkmen Brigade 16 (Badr) in the vicinity of Kirkuk General Hospital on the night of January 15. The incident took place after a group of PMU fighters arrived at Komari hospital with seven comrades wounded in an earlier roadside bombing. Federal police told the fighters that they must give up their guns before entering the hospital. After they refused to do so, a fracas occurred between the PMU fighters and the Federal Police. Three PMU fighters were injured, and the others were arrested after the Federal Police brought the situation under control. A number of casualties were reported on both sides.

It was also reported this week that the PUK has reached an agreement with the counterterrorism forces of the central Iraqi government to keep the flag of the northern autonomous Kurdistan region raised atop its main offices in Kirkuk city. Officials of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan party (PUK) and Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service (CTS)

top commander Staff Lieutenant General Abdul Wahab al-Saadi agreed that the Kurdish party could keep hoisting the flag over its main local branch as well as its politburo office in Kirkuk, the Kurdish outlet said. However, based on the agreement, the Kurdistan region flag will have to be taken down on all other PUK offices across Kirkuk province, it added.

Meanwhile, the security situation in Diyala province has continued to worsen during the reporting period, particularly in the town of Khanaqin to the north east of Baqubah. Reporting this week has pointed to the fact that there has been an exodus of civilians fleeing the town after a major uptick in IS attacks were noted. Press said that people from Khanaqin's surrounding areas have abandoned their villages and moved to safer towns as the number of IS attacks has increased significantly. Over the past 16 days, Islamic State members have carried out 10 attacks around the areas of Khanaqin and Jalawla, targeting Iraqi federal police forces and villagers. "We, as the people of Sherk village, are requesting the Ministry of Peshmerga [and Kurdish forces] to save us as the situation is getting out of control and insecurity spreads," Jawad Dara, head of Sherk village, told Kurdistan 24.

It was also reported that a collection of militants who fought for Islamic State have recently established a new training base near the Hamrin dam in the Khanaqin district of Iraq's Diyala province, according to the Commander of the Peshmerga's 136th Brigade Osman Hassan. He also stated to press that a number of foreigner fighters are currently training the remnants of the militant group at the base. Hassan also claimed that some local villagers were among those who had been trained at the IS training base. Hassan stated that the security vacuum between the lines of the Peshmerga and the Iraqi central government forces are being increasingly exploited by IS in order to conduct operations in Kirkuk, Sinjar, Makhmour, and Khanaqin. He claimed that the Iraqi Ministry of Defence has called for a joint military operation with the Peshmerga to fight the militants in those areas, but the Peshmerga have so far refused to take part. He stated that the Peshmerga preferred a scenario where Kurdish forces return to the areas that they controlled before October 2017. "They want to create a joint force [between Peshmerga and Iraqi forces]. But we disagree," Hassan said.

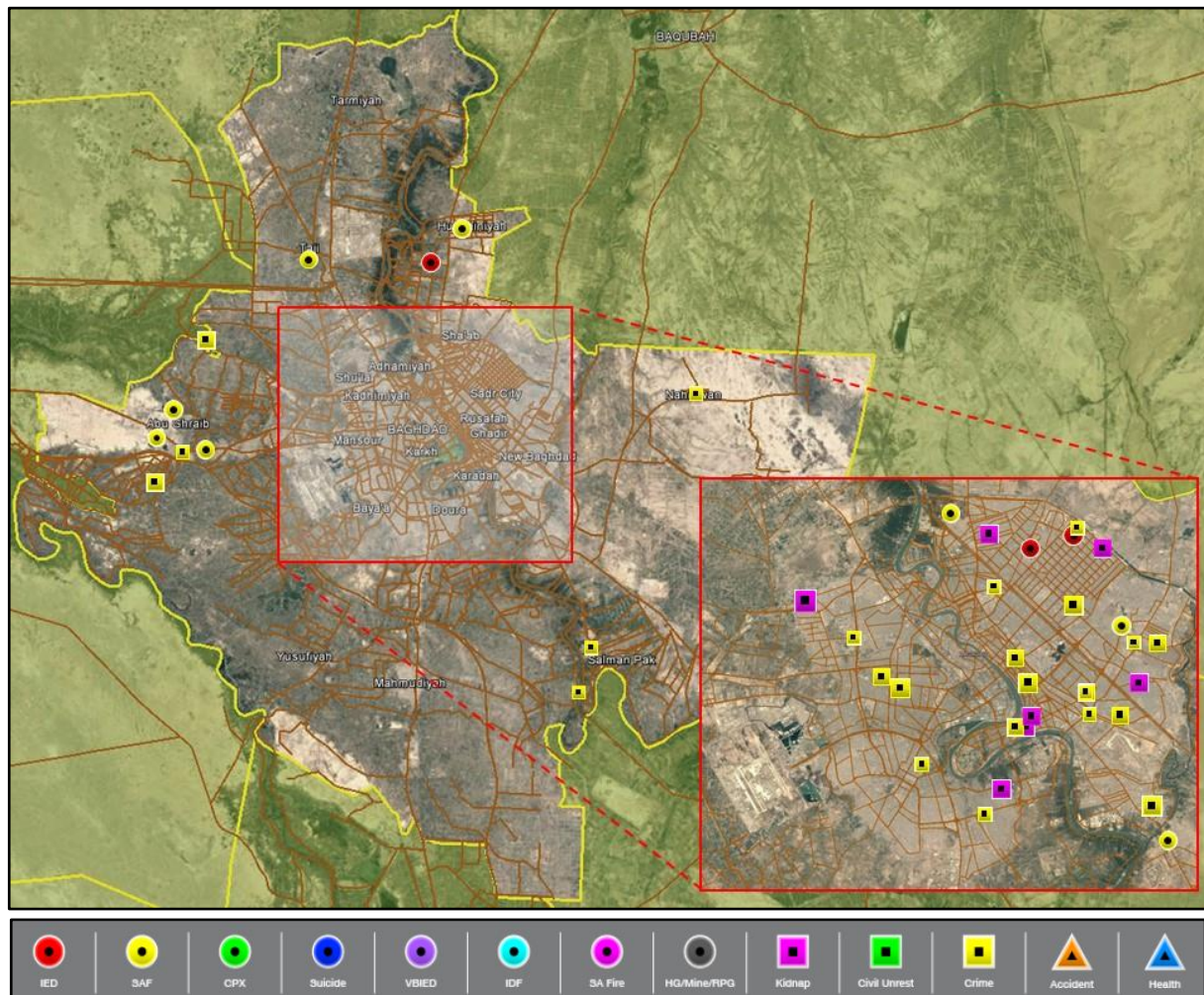
**Anbar Province**

In Anbar province this week, a number of successful strikes against IS targets both within the province, primarily around the town of Rutbah, but also over the border in Syria have been recorded. Commander of Anbar Operations, Major General Mahmoud al-Falahi announced on January 12 the killing of five IS militants in an Iraqi airstrike targeting an IS vehicle in the Chalabat region, south of Rutbah and a bomb-laden vehicle was destroyed in a US-led coalition airstrike in Horan Valley, also in Rutbah district on January 14. In addition, four IS militants were also killed and one vehicle loaded with food supplies, explosive vests, weapons and ammunition was destroyed in an Iraqi airstrike in the same region.

In addition, a single source report indicated that the PMU's Anbar Operations had prevented US forces from carrying out a reconnaissance mission in the province on January 15. Operations commander Qassim Musleh, claimed that the US forces had been gathering intelligence on the PMU themselves in order to ascertain PMU strengths stationed on the Iraqi-Syrian border. He added that "Anbar Operations Command for the PMU prevented the US forces from completing the survey, forcing them to return to the base and not to get close to the popular mobilization forces" pointing out that "this is a violation of Iraqi national sovereignty".

Finally, PMU artillery launched a number of fire missions against Islamic State targets in the Sousse border area inside Syrian territory on January 18 according to reporting, resulting in the deaths of at least 15 militants and the Iraqi Air Force reportedly destroyed an IS command centre inside a Mosque in the Sousse area of eastern Syria.



**Capital Region (Including Baghdad City)**

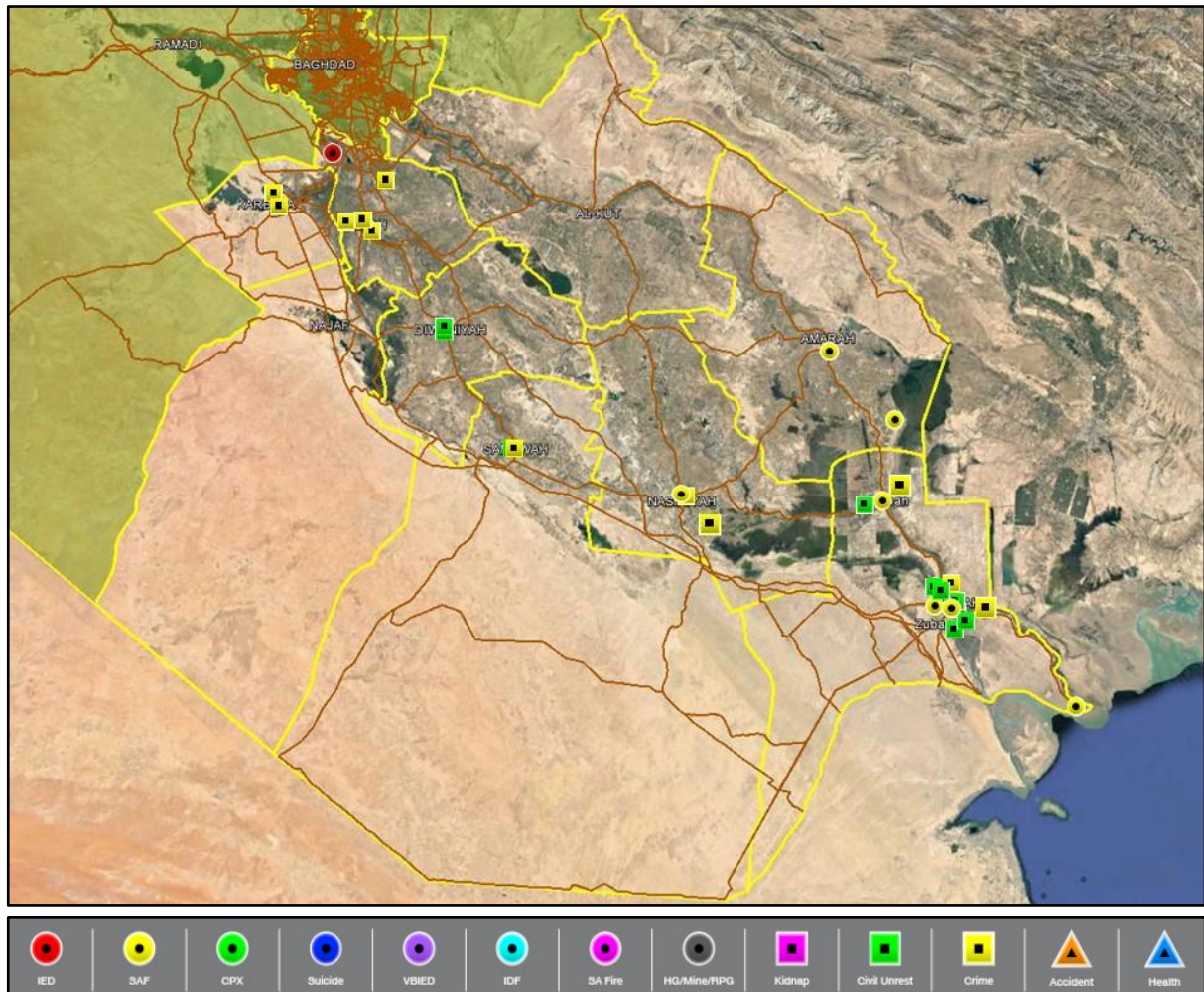
No large-scale incidents took place in Baghdad City, where activity trends again conformed to long-standing patterns. Hostilities were accordingly driven by local disputes and criminality predominantly concentrated in the less affluent districts of the city, including Sadr City, Adhamiyah and New Baghdad. With the exception of arrests under article IV terrorism, no terror-related activity was noted across the city.

Meanwhile, Iraq's Ministry of Interior has announced the arrest of the killers of a Baghdad restaurant owner, denying that they have any political affiliations. An unidentified assailant drove past Baghdad's Sadr neighbourhood on a motorbike on January 10, shooting and killing Emad Jabbar, the owner of the renowned Laymouna restaurant. The murder ignited much tension between the Shia Al-Hikmah (Wisdom) movement, led by Shia cleric Ammar al-Hakim, and the Iran-backed Asaib Ahl al-Haq group, which is affiliated to the Shia-dominated Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF). The Wisdom movement's media outlets reported that the killer of the restaurant owner belongs to Asaib Ahl al-Haq group, but the group strongly denied the reports. Wahab al-Taei, an interior ministry official, said late on January 12 that security forces had arrested two men and a woman, describing them as the "killers" of the restaurant owner, the website of the privately-owned Al-Sumaria TV reported. "The incident has no relation to any political factions," Taei said. "It's a criminal incident." Iraq's Communication and Media Commission (CMC), the state-owned media regulator, urged both parties to "refrain from libel and exchange of accusations", in a statement reported by Al-Sumaria website on January 12.

Hostilities in the provincial areas were confined to population centres characterised by high levels of violence, including Husseinia in the north, Abu Ghraib in the west and Mada'in in the southeast. Incidents involved low-

level SAF attacks, grenades and kidnappings, affecting the local population and driven by local issues. Incidents this week included an attack by unidentified gunmen in Jisr Diyala, south east of Baghdad which resulted in the death of a civilian and armed assailants shot and killed a civilian near a mosque in Husseinia. In a separate incident, armed assailants shot and killed a civilian in Taji district, north of Baghdad on January 17 and two civilians were wounded when their house was subjected to a SAF attack in Abu Ghraib, west of Baghdad. One suspect was subsequently arrested in relation to the incident.



**Southern Provinces**

This week, Babel province has continued to witness IED attacks against ISF in predominantly sunni-majority areas in the northern part of the region. Two members of the PMUs were reportedly wounded when a roadside IED detonated against their vehicle on the evening of January 11 in the Bahbahan area in Jurf al-Nasr district, north of Hillah.

In Karbala province, a source at the Karbala oil refinery told press that “thousands of Iraqi workers in the refinery will be demobilized”. In an interview Baghdad today, the source stated that “The workers who will be demobilized are all on temporary contracts which expire at the end of each year, and now 2018 has ended, these contracts will now end. He added however that “the contracts can be renewed provided they are within the legal framework” Meanwhile, a member of the political bureau of Asaib Ahl al-Haq, Saad al-Saadi, said in a tweet through his Twitter account, that “the Karbala refinery is to expel the Iraqi workers and replace them with foreign workers amounting to 14,000 foreign workers”. In addition, in Maysan province, dozens of civilians demonstrated outside the Samawah refinery, denouncing an alleged reduction in the local national workforce which was alleged to be related to the employment of 50 x Iranian technicians by the Ministry of Industry and Minerals to construct a number of oil storage tanks at the facility.

Also in Maysan, a member of the provincial council of Maysan governorate, Kazem Hami claimed to have escaped an assassination attempt on the morning of January 15. Hami told NINA that “I escaped an assassination attempt that was carried out near Qal’at Salih district, south of Maysan, by armed men riding in a pick-up car which was parked in the opposite direction. When I approached, they opened fire on my car with automatic weapons and hit



it with several bullets". The council member did not mention or accuse any party, and police investigations began immediately to identify the perpetrators and their targets according to press.

In Basra province this week, another UXO/ERW incident was recorded with a device functioned on the Luhais oilfield (owned by the Basra Oil Company) resulting in the death of a 20 year old shepherd on January 16. An increase in SAF attacks/incidents was also recorded this week; most linked to tribal and family feuding. An 'honour' killing on the 16th highlighted that summary justice is still practiced for perceived or minor events which may bring a families name into disrepute. Meanwhile, a low-yield IED on January 14 targeting a Sunni mosque in Zubayr was believed to have been left as a warning. The device was found and removed without incident. Protester action has once again continued; the 'Basra Youth' and residents of Qarmat Ali and Huwair being the main protagonists with the activity linked initially to employment for local residents on West Qurna II (WQ II), but gradually being subsumed by action for the release of protesters arrested at the first demo. Continued fiscal uncertainty and demands for increased quotas for local employment, combined with local rumour about potential employment among foreign are likely to fuel further local protest. A minor protest in this regard was recorded on the WQ II Concession early in the week, with residents of Huwair demonstrating for employment. Protest activity remains non-violent, however, warning shots were fired by the ISF and the subsequent panic within the crowd resulted in minor casualties.

**ACRONYM LIST**

All - Area of Intelligence Interest	MoO - Ministry of Oil
AKA - Also Known As	MoT - Ministry of Transportation
AO - Area of Operations	MSR - Main Supply Route
APC - Armored Personnel Carrier	NFDK - No Further Details Known
APIED - Anti-Personnel IED	NGO - Non-Governmental Organization (aid/charity)
AQ - Al-Qaeda	NSTR - Nothing Significant To Report
AT - Anti-Tank	OCG - Organized Crime Group
ATGW - Anti Tank Guided Weapon	OPF - Oil Protection Force
AVIED - Anti-Vehicle IED	PAX - Person, Persons or Passenger
BBIED - Body Borne IED	PBIED - Person-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (UN Term)
Bde - Brigade	PMF - Popular Mobilisation Forces
Bn - Battalion	Pol - Point of Impact (for IDF)
BXP - Border Crossing Point	PoO - Point of Origin (for IDF)
CET - Convoy Escort Team	PSAF - Precision Small Arms Fire
CLC - Concerned Local Citizens	PSC - Private Security Company
CoP - Chief of Police	PSD - Private Security Detail
CP - Check Point	RCIED - Remote-Controlled IED
C-PERS - Captured Personnel	RPG - Rocket Propelled Grenade
CPX - Complex Attack (attack using multiple weapon systems)	RTA - Road Traffic Accident
CQA - Close Quarter Assassination/Attack	SAF - Small Arms Fire
DBS - Drive by Shooting	SAFIRE - Surface to Air FIRE
Div - Division	SF - Special Forces
DoD - Department of Defense	SVBIED - Suicide Vehicle Borne IED
DoS - Department of State	SVEST - Suicide Explosive Worn Vest
DoS - US Department of State	TCN - Third Country National
ECP - Entry Control Point	TCP - Traffic Control Point
EFP - Explosively Formed Projectile	Technical - An improvised weapon-mounted pick-up truck
EOD - Explosive Ordnance Disposal (Bomb Squad)	TTP - Tactics, Techniques and Practices
ERW - Explosive Remnants of War	UVIED - Under Vehicle IED
FoM - Freedom of Movement	UXO - Unexploded Ordnance
GoI - Government of Iraq	VBIED - Vehicle Borne IED
HCN - Host Country National	VCP - Vehicle Checkpoint
HG - Hand Grenade	WIA - Wounded in Action
HME - Home Made Explosive	
HMG - Heavy Machine Gun	
HVT - High Value Target	
IC - International Community	
IDF - Indirect Fire (i.e.: rockets, mortars)	
IDP - Internally Displaced Persons	
IEC - Independent Electoral Commission	
IED - Improvised Explosive Device	
IM - International Military	
IOC - International Oil Company	
IRAM - Improvised Rocket Assisted Mortar	
IRL - Improvised Rocket Launcher	
IS - Islamic State	
IVCP - Illegal Vehicle Check Point	
IVO - In Vicinity Of	
IZ - International Zone	
KIA - Killed in Action	
LN - Local National/Iraqi Civilian	
MAIED - Magnetically attached IED (aka UVIED)	
MIA - Missing in Action	
MoD - Ministry of Defense	
MoF - Ministry of Finance	
MoFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs	
MoHE - Ministry of Higher Education	
Mol - Ministry of Interior	
MoJ - Ministry of Justice	

**GARDAWORLD INFORMATION SERVICES**

From our management offices and field offices in strategic locations our constant monitoring of the high-risk environments in which we work is conveyed through our range of .Xplored™ risk analysis reports. The reports contain detailed updates, delivering current and relevant ground-truth information to assist both our personnel and our clients in their decision-making.

Our wider risk management solutions provide members of the defense, diplomatic, development, oil & gas and infrastructure sectors operating in potentially high-risk and complex environments with a comprehensive range of risk analysis, intelligence, crisis response, and training services. These services are designed to provide clients with the proactive capability to remain aware in potentially hostile environments and identify risks while strengthening their reactive capacity in emergency situations.

Our current regular reporting geographies include: Nigeria, Mali, Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen on a daily, weekly, fortnightly, and monthly basis.

Through our constant monitoring and predictive threat analysis our Information Services team help you plan for, manage, and respond to risks.

For more information on our .Xplored reports or for information about our special-to-task reports tailored to individual client requirements, please contact us: [informationops@garda.com](mailto:informationops@garda.com) or contact our regional representative [iraq.ram@garda.com](mailto:iraq.ram@garda.com) (Mobile: +964 7823 783 972)

For more information on how our services can support your business in Iraq contact:  
Daniel Matthews, Senior Director Iraq [daniel.matthews@garda.com](mailto:daniel.matthews@garda.com)

**GARDAWORLD****A global leader in comprehensive security and risk management**

GardaWorld International Protective Services is the international security division of GardaWorld Security Corporation, the world's largest privately owned security company with over 62,000 global staff.

We support clients in emerging, complex and high-risk markets around the world with static security, security consulting, risk analysis and reporting, crisis management and business continuity, mobile security, close protection, training and kidnap for ransom and extortion response solutions.

We work across multiple business sectors to provide protection and security for clients in the extractives, aerospace and defense, critical infrastructure, government and diplomatic and development sectors to secure employees, assets, and reputation so clients can focus solely on running daily operations and growing their business.

Discover more about the markets we serve and to learn how our international security solutions can help you contact us today: [gwinfo@garda.com](mailto:gwinfo@garda.com)



**Middle East**

International Protective Services Headquarters  
Office 2502, Tower 2, Currency House  
DIFC, PO Box 482069  
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

**United States**

1101 Wilson Boulevard  
Suite 1725  
Arlington, VA, 22209  
United States

**UK**

5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
1, London Bridge  
London  
SE1 9BG

**Europe**

37-39 rue des Deux Eglises  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium

[garda.com](http://garda.com)