1.4.7 Southern governorates (Babil, Basrah, Karbala, Missan, Muthanna, Najaf, Thi-Qar, Qadissiya, and Wassit)

1.4.7 Southern governorates (Babil, Basrah, Karbala, Missan, Muthanna, Najaf, Thi-Qar, Qadissiya, and Wassit)

Southern governorates map

Map 8. Southern governorates, © UNOCHA and MapAction.381

For a general description of the southern governorates, please refer to section 2.2 and 2.11-2.18 of the EUAA COI Report Iraq – Security Situation (May 2024).

The ISF maintained four Provincial Operations Commands in the country's south, located in Karbala, Amarah in Missan governorate, Nasiriyah in Thi-Qar governorate and Basrah.382 According to a June 2025 article published by Al-Hurra channel, all key pro-Iranian militias had significant economic clout in southern Iraq by controlling commercial activities at ports and border crossings. The town of Jurf Al-Sakhar in Babil governorate was described as being under Kata'ib Hezbollah's control, while hosting fighters from other militia such as Harakat Al-Nujaba, Kata'ib Sayyid Al-Shuhada as well as allied foreign fighters.383 Furthermore, Kata'ib Hezbollah was reportedly trying to expand its influence in Basrah by fuelling tensions between Basrah's governor and Prime Minister Al-Sudani.384 Tensions involving armed factions were reported in August 2024, when armed clashes broke out between PMF forces and members of the Iraqi army 385 near an army checkpoint in Karbala.386 Furthermore, in May 2025, security forces arrested several security guards of a local Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq leader, in the north of Basrah, after the killing of a Saraya Al-Salam member.387

Armed clashes in the context of tribal conflicts were reportedly a frequent occurrence in Basrah, Missan and Thi-Qar governorates, involving light and medium weapons and in some cases mortar shells. The root causes of these tribal conflicts were issues such as control over agricultural land, water resources, and border crossings.388 Local media frequently reported on such clashes in the three aforementioned governorates as well as in Wassit and Qadissiya over the reference period389, some of which resulted in casualties.390 The Iraqi army as well as police forces were deployed to contain tribal feuds.391 See section 2.10.

Security incidents (number and type of security incidents)

During the reference period (1 August 2024 – 1 August 2025), ACLED recorded 381 security incidents in the southern governorates, of which 196 were coded as battles, 51 as explosions/remote violence, and 134 as incidents of violence against civilians. Security incidents were recorded especially in the southernmost governorates of Missan (124), Thi-Qar (88) and Basrah (66).[392]

Image

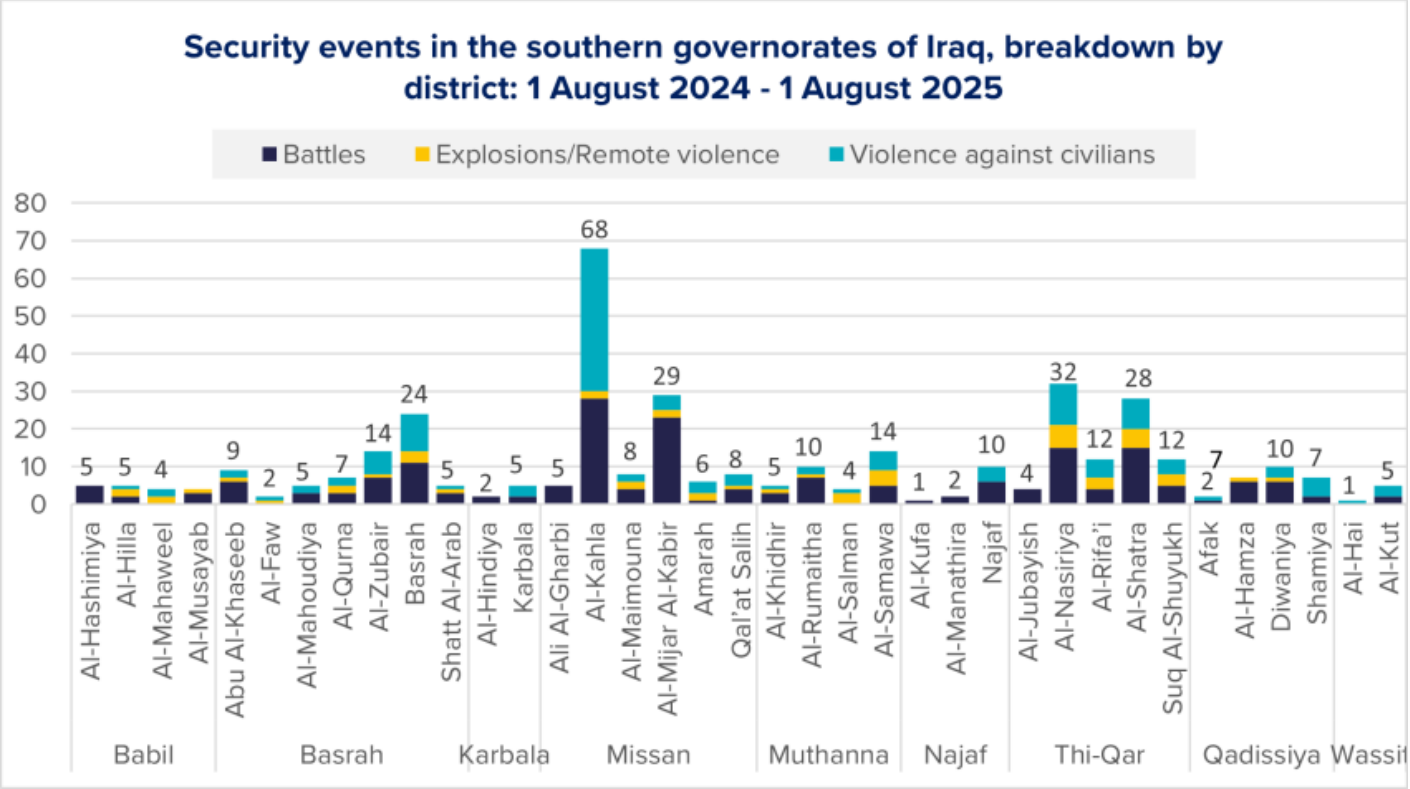


Figure 13: Security events coded 'battles', 'explosions/remote violence' and 'violence against civilians' in the southern governorates between August 2024 and 1 August 2025 on district level, based on ACLED data.[393]

According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups were involved as main actor (coded as either 'Actor 1' or 'Actor 2') in 158 security incidents, followed by unidentified tribal militia with 156 security incidents.[394] For the period between 1 August 2024 and 1 August 2025, UCDP recorded 6 security events in southern governorates (1 in Babil, 2 in Basrah, 1 in Missan, 2 in Wassit), leading to 9 casualties. No security incidents were recorded in the governorates of Karbala, Muthanna, Najaf and Qadissya.[395]

Civilian casualties

According to UNAMI data, Basrah recorded the highest number of civilian casualties among the southern governorates, with 23 casualties including 10 fatalities, and the second highest number nationwide. UNAMI recorded 8 civilian casualties (including 1 killed) in Missan governorate; 4 civilian casualties in Muthanna (including 1 killed); 1 civilian casualty in Najaf and 5 civilian casualties in Thi-Qar (including 3 killed). [396]

UNAMI did not record any civilian casualties in the southern governorates of Babil, Karbala, Qadissiya and Wassit.[397]

Consistent with UNAMI data, UCDP reported the highest number of civilian deaths in Basrah (5) among the southern governorates.[398] UCDP recorded 1 civilian fatality in Missan, 2 in Wassit, and 1 in Thi-Qar.[399] UCDP did not record any civilian casualties in the southern governorates of Babil, Karbala, Qadissiya, Najaf and Muthanna.[400]

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and ERW

No information on new conflict-related infrastructure damage in the reference period could be found within the time constraints of this report.

A spokesperson at the Iraqi Directorate for Mine Action (DMA) stated in August 2024 that Basrah governorate is among four governorates with the largest mine-contaminated areas.[401] As of the end of 2023, the Mine Action Review estimated the area of cluster munition-contamination for the southern governorates (excluding Wassit) in the following way: Muthanna (90 117 749 m^2), Basrah (56 053 577 m^2), Thi-Qar (43 329 654 m^2), Najaf (3 704 571 m^2), Babil (911 758 m^2) and Karbala (141 910 m^2). The Mine Action Review further revealed that at the end of 2023, 92% of Iraq's overall contamination was concentrated in Basrah, Muthanna and Thi-Qar governorates, while Missan and Qadissiya were reported to be cleared of cluster-munition contamination.[402] Several instances of ERW explosions were reported over the reference period especially in Basrah governorate,[403] but also in Missan[404] and Thi-Qar,[405] causing deaths and injuries.[406] Basrah governorate, particularly Al-Zubair district, was reportedly especially affected by ERW contamination.[407]

Conflict-induced displacement and return

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)[408] unit stated in its Iraq Master List Report 134 (covering the period September – December 2024) that, as of 31 December 2024, the southern governorates were hosting 46 440 displaced people, 15 912 of them in Babil governorate, followed by Karbala governorate with 9 876 and Najaf governorate with 6 378. 96 % of IDPs in Babil governorate were displaced within the governorate, while in the governorates of Karbala 86 % of IDPs and in Najaf 99 % of IDPs were displaced from Ninewa governorate.[409] The only southern province where IOM had monitored return movements was Babil governorate, with 2 160 returnees. This amounted to a return rate[410] of 5 %.[411]

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  EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Middle East, as of 1 August 2025, url

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  EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering from 1 August 2024 to 1 August 2025

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  Please note that IOM differentiates between displacement induced by conflict/violence and displacement driven by natural disasters. The displacement due to natural disasters is not included in the DTM data, see IDMC, Country Profile Iraq, n.d., url

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  IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Iraq IDPs Master Lists 134, 12 February 2025, url

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- 411

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