1.4.8 Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Erbil, Dohuk, Sulaymaniyah)

1.4.8 Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Erbil, Dohuk, Sulaymaniyah)

Imported image pandoc_image_1.jpeg

Map 9. Kurdistan Region of Iraq, © UNHCR.412

For a general description of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), please refer to section 2.8-2.10 of the EUAA COI Report Iraq – Security Situation (May 2024). This subsection covers the governorates in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), which include Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah. At the beginning of May 2025, Halabja officially became Iraq's 19th governorate, separating it from Sulaymaniyah governorate.413 However, for the purposes of this report, data on Halabja is clustered with Sulaymaniyah governorate, as the majority of sources did not treat it as a separate governorate, with the exception of UCDP in the section on civilian casualties. Furthermore, the administrative change only applied to the last three months of the 12-month reference period.

A population census was carried out in November 2024, however, population figures aggregated by governorate were not released (see section 1.4). The KRG Minister of Planning announced in late November 2024 that according to preliminary census results, the population of the KRI had reached over 6.37 million.414

The KRG has gone through a years-long process of trying to unify its military forces, especially politically-affiliated Peshmerga units 70 and 80, under a single command.415 During the reference period, the effort to dissolve these factions and merge all forces under the control of the KRG Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs (MoPA) were still underway. The goal is to create two regional commands, 11 light infantry divisions, and two support commands, with a total force of 138 000 personnel under MoPA. As of March 2025, only four divisions were fully or partly active, as planned timelines were said not to be met.416

During the reference period, joint Peshmerga and Iraqi units were deployed in areas disputed between the KRG and the central government.417 However, tensions between the forces persisted, as in July 2025 Iraqi military forces advanced on an oil field on the border between the two regions,418 leading to Peshmerga forces to mobilise in Garmian district in southern KRI.419 In a previous incident in August 2024, PMF supported by Iraqi military forces had undertaken a similar movement towards the oil field.420

In May 2025, the PKK announced it would disband and end its armed struggle, which was followed by 30 PKK fighters destroying their weapons in a symbolic event in Sulaymaniyah city in July.421 As of July 2025, it was estimated that there were roughly 2 000 to 5 000 PKK fighters in the Qandil Mountains in the KRI.422 Turkish operations against the PKK were reported throughout the reference period,423 including airstrikes and shelling,424 which persisted following the PKK announcement.425 According to Community Peacemaker Teams,426 as of June 2025, Turkish military attacks in the KRI remained steady but were increasingly concentrated in Amedi district of Dohuk governorate. Meanwhile, the PKK reportedly carried out several drone attacks against Turkish military bases which it claimed were acts of self-defense 427 (see section 1.2 Overview of recent security developments). The Turkish ban on flights in and out of Sulaymaniyah, initially imposed on 3 April 2023 for three months, has been since extended, most recently for the fifth time in July 2025 for an additional three months, until 6 October 2025.428

Starting in mid-June 2025, the KRI was subjected to a series of drone attacks429 targeting military sites,430 Erbil airport431 and oil installations.432 No group claimed responsibility for the drone strikes433 and while the KRG accused pro-Iranian militias of being behind the attacks, as of late July 2025, no perpetrators had officially been identified.434 One drone hit the Darkar IDP camp near Dohuk city, causing material damage.435

Security incidents (number and type of security incidents)

During the reference period (1 August 2024 – 1 August 2025), there were 4 073 security incidents recorded by ACLED in the KRI, of which 476 were coded as battles, 3 575 as explosions/remote violence, and 22 as incidents of violence against civilians. Of the overall security incidents, 2 917 were recorded in Dohuk, most of them in Amedi (Al-Amadiya) district (2 871), 1 050 in Erbil and 106 in Sulaymaniyah.436 The high level of incidents in Dohuk was due to the Turkish military's ongoing military operation against the PKK, which aimed at driving the PKK out of the areas bordering Türkiye. However, the number of Turkish military strikes notably decreased following the disarmament ceremony held by PKK members in July 2025.437

Figure 14 Iraq

Figure14: Security events coded 'battles', 'explosions/remote violence' and 'violence against civilians' in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq between August 2024 and 1 August 2025 on district level, based on ACLED data.438

According to ACLED data, Turkish military forces were involved as main actor (coded as either 'Actor 1' or 'Actor 2') in 3 970 security incidents, in 3 637 of which the PKK was also involved as an actor.439 For the period between 1 August 2024 and 1 August 2025, the UCDP recorded 105 events (65 in Dohuk, 28 in Erbil, 11 Sulaymaniyah, 1 in Halabja), leading to 102 casualties).440

Civilian casualties

According to UNAMI data, Sulaymaniyah (including Halabja) recorded the highest number of civilian casualties in the KRI, with 9 casualties (including 7 fatalities). UNAMI recorded 6 civilian casualties in Erbil governorate (including 4 killed) and 6 civilian casualties in Dohuk (including 3 killed).441

UCDP recorded 15 civilian deaths in the KRI (3 in Dohuk, 4 in Erbil, 8 in Sulaymaniyah).[442]

Conflict-related infrastructure damage and ERW

Turkish airstrikes and artillery shelling reportedly caused material damage to farms in Dohuk's Amedi district.[443] A series of unclaimed drone attacks targeted several oil fields in the KRI in July 2025 and caused damage to the energy infrastructure.[444] An April 2025 BBC report described how a strip of land bordering Türkiye, which in some areas reached up to 40 kilometres into KRI territory, has been heavily affected by Turkish bombardment as well as being de facto under control of a wide network of Turkish military bases.[445]

While the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA) was carrying out mine clearance efforts throughout the KRI,[446] the organisation's director stated in April 2025 that about 40 % of the originally contaminated areas in the KRI, amounting to almost 250 million square kilometres, remained uncleared. 47 % of these uncleared areas were reportedly in Erbil governorate.[447] According to Kurdistan24, five civilians lost their lives and four were wounded due to ERW explosions in Erbil governorate in the first half of 2025.[448] Several instances of ERW detonations were reported in the mountainous areas of Soran district in 2025, leading to casualties.[449]

Conflict-induced displacement and return

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)[450] unit stated in its Iraq Master List Report 134 (covering the period September – December 2024) that, as of 31 December 2024, Dohuk governorate was hosting 211 028, Erbil governorate 204 990 and Sulaymaniyah 112 710 displaced people. For Dohuk governorate, this figure represented a decrease by about 10 % compared to 2023, for Erbil governorate a decrease by about 9 % and for Sulaymaniyah a decrease by about 14 %. All of the IDPs in Dohuk were originally from Ninewa. In Erbil governorate, 50 % of the IDPs were from Ninewa and 19 % from Anbar, while in Sulaymaniyah, 26 % of IDPs were from Baghdad, 20 % from Diyala, 18 % from Salah Al-Din and 16 % from Anbar.[451] According to US official sources, in the first quarter of 2025, approximately 109 000 IDPs were residing in 21 camps in the KRI and three informal camps in Ninewa governorate.[452]

As of December 2024, IOM had monitored return movements solely in Erbil governorate, with 64 542 returnees all located in Makhmour district, and in Dohuk governorate, where all 744 returnees were reported in Zakho district.[453]

- [412]

  UNHCR, KRI Operational Context Map, UNHCR Iraq, March 2025, Map, 12 March 2025, url

- [413]

  Rudaw, Halabja becomes Iraq's 19th province, 5 May 2025, url

- [414]

Kurdistan24, Kurdistan Region's population exceeds 6.37 million according to preliminary census, 25 November 2024, url

- 415

Rudaw, US-led coalition support for Peshmerga to continue: Peshmerga ministry official, 10 August 2025, url

- 416

USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, January 1, 2025 – March 31, 2025, 29 April 2025, url, p. 49

- 417

Shafaq News, Joint Operations Command confirms killing 4 militants between Saladin and Kirkuk, 31 January 2025, url; Rudaw, Joint Iraqi-Peshmerga brigades to address ISIS in disputed areas, 25 September 2024, url

- 418

Kurdistan24, Peshmerga on High Alert as Iraqi Forces Push Toward Kurdistani Territories, 4 July 2025, url

- 419

Shafaq News, Baghdad rejects military movements near Kurdistan borders, 4 July 2025, url

- 420

Kurdistan24, Peshmerga on High Alert as Iraqi Forces Push Toward Kurdistani Territories, 4 July 2025, url

- 421

DW, PKK fighters begin handing over weapons at ceremony, 11 July 2025, url

- 422

Al Jazeera, How will the PKK’s disarmament play out in the region?, 15 July 2025, url

- 423

International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Iraq: August 2024 – July 2025, n.d., url

- 424

Shafaq News, Turkish shelling sparks wildfires in Kurdistan’s Duhok, 26 June 2025, url; PBS, Turkey strikes Kurdish militant targets again after deadly attack on military company, 24 October 2024, url; VOA, Turkish airstrikes kill 17 Kurdish militants in northern Iraq, ministry says, 12 August 2024, url

- 425

  Rudaw, Turkey continues to strike PKK ahead of disarmament: Watchdog, 11 July 2025, url; Shafaq News, Turkish shelling sparks wildfires in Kurdistan’s Duhok, 26 June 2025, url

- 426

  CPT is a peace initiative sponsored by several Christian denominations and organisations (CPT, About us, n.d., url) and in one of its worldwide projects monitors Turkish military operations in Iraqi Kurdistan.

- 427

  CPT, Turkish Military attacks hold steady in June, remain concentrated as symbolic PKK disarmament ceremony approaches, 10 July 2025, url

- 428

  Rudaw, Turkey extends flight ban on Sulaimani again, 6 July 2025, url

- 429

  Kurdistan24, Escalating Drone Attacks Target Kurdistan Region: Latest Strike Hits Garmiyan, 3 July 2025, url

- 430

  EPC, Drone Attacks in Iraq: Who Is Behind Them And Why?, 29 July 2025, url; Rudaw, Drone downed over Peshmerga base near Sulaimani, 10 July 2025, url

- 431

  Rudaw, Two suicide drones intercepted near Erbil airport, 22 June 2025, url; National (The), Drone carrying explosives shot down near Iraq's Erbil airport, 4 July 2025, url

- 432

  HRW, Iraq: Damage to Kurdistan Region Oil Fields Puts Rights at Risk, 29 July 2025, url

- 433

  HRW, Iraq: Damage to Kurdistan Region Oil Fields Puts Rights at Risk, 29 July 2025, url

- 434

  EPC, Drone Attacks in Iraq: Who Is Behind Them And Why?, 29 July 2025, url

- 435

  Rudaw, UNAMI condemns ‘attack’ on Yazidi IDP Camp in Duhok, urges probe, 1 July 2025, url

- 436

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

- 437

Van Wilgenburg, W., A Sigh of Relief in Iraqi Kurdistan, Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, 12 August 2025, url

- 438

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

- 439

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

- 440

EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 August 2024 to 1 August 2025 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 19 August 2025

- 441

UNAMI, Email to EUAA, 4 August 2025

- 442

EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 August 2024 to 1 August 2025 provided by courtesy of UCDP by email, 19 August 2025

- 443

Shafaq News, Turkish shelling sparks wildfires in Kurdistan’s Duhok, 26 June 2025, url; +964, Turkish shelling hits Amedi villages during Friday prayers, 21 June 2025, url; Rudaw, ‘We were surrounded by fire’: Duhok villagers battle blazes blamed on Turkish bombs, 8 August 2024, url

- 444

Reuters, Drone strikes shut oilfields in Iraq's Kurdistan, cut output by up to 150,000 bpd, 16 July 2025, url

- 445

BBC News, Life inside Iraq's 'Forbidden Zone' controlled by Turkey, 30 April 2025, url

- 446

KRG, IKMAA Destroys Mines, Explosives, and War Remnants in the Kurdistan Region, 22 April 2025, url

- 447

  Rudaw, 40% landmine areas remain to be cleared in Kurdistan Region: Official, 15 April 2025, url

- 448

  Kurdistan24, إزالة آلاف الألغام ومخلفات الحرب خلال النصف الأول من 2025 في أربيل وسوران [Thousands of mines and war remnants cleared in Erbil and Soran in the first half of 2025], 8 July 2025, url

- 449

  Shafaq News, Landmine kills shepherd in Kurdistan Region, 28 June 2025, url; Rudaw, One killed in Sidakan landmine blast, 6 April 2025, url; Rudaw, Landmine blast kills tradesman in Soran, 2 April 2025, url

- 450

  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

- 451

  IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Iraq Master List Report 134 (September-December 2024), January 2025, url, p. 4

- 452

  USDOD, Operation Inherent Resolve and other U.S. Government Activities related to Iraq & Syria, January 1, 2025 – March 31, 2025, 29 April 2025, url, p. 41

- 453

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

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu