

Civil Unrest



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Iraq Alert: Armed clashes between KRG security forces, Herki tribe members occur on November 29 outside Erbil Province's Lanaz Refinery; risk of violence in area to persist in coming days

Current Situation:

- On November 29, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) security forces opened fire during a protest on the Erbil-Gwer road, adjacent to the Khabat District's Lanaz Refinery. The site is located about 15 km southwest of Erbil city.
- Reports indicate that at least one protester was killed and several more were injured. The demonstrators, who were reportedly members of the Herki tribe, had demanded employment opportunities at the oil facility. Armed clashes between security forces and Herki tribe members were recorded.
- November 29 reports indicate that the Herki tribe declared a general mobilization, vowing that it would not "stand by" the security forces' use of violence against the protesters.
- The KRG's Ministry of Interior on November 29 confirmed that one individual was killed in the clashes near the refinery. It claimed that "external parties" had encouraged the protest in order to create unrest and block the Erbil-Gwer Road to sabotage the KRG's effort to ensure the supply of liquid fuel for electricity supply in the region. The statement also highlighted that such external actors had instigated the [November 26](#) attack against the Khor Mor gas field to disrupt electricity in the KRG.



Source: [INA: KRG's Mol](#)

Assessments & Forecast:

1. Over the past year, Erbil Province's Khabat district has witnessed periodic demonstrations denouncing socioeconomic grievances. For instance, on July 30, residents of the Khabat district set tires ablaze on the Erbil-Mosul Highway to protest deteriorating living conditions and insufficient services. The November 29 demonstration, in which protesters demanded employment at the Lanaz Refinery, is part of this longstanding trend, underscoring that residents expect authorities to improve the living conditions in the region.
2. The Mol statement indicates an attempt to portray the protesters as collaborating with external actors seeking to destabilize the KRG by disrupting the region's oil and gas, and electricity supply. The fact that authorities link the development to the [November 26](#) UAV strike targeting the Khor Mor Gas Field suggests their effort to portray the demonstrators as working in conjunction with Iran-backed factions, which are likely responsible for this attack. Herki tribe members will likely perceive this statement as an attempt by the KRG's security apparatus to deflect criticism of their crackdown and delegitimize a socioeconomic protest by portraying the tribe as being instrumentalized politically by hostile actors, or even actively collaborating with them.
3. The fact that the Herki tribe reportedly called for a general mobilization underscores the potential for an escalation of tensions between the tribe and KRG security forces in the coming days. This is furthermore indicated by the reported deployment of security forces to the village of Lajan, located adjacent to the Lanaz Refinery, during the evening hours of November 29, which has likely aggravated perceptions of the KRG's confrontative stance among Herki tribe members.

FORECAST: Although no further clashes have been reported in the area on November 30, the deployment of security forces underscores the potential for security operations, including arrest raids targeting individuals suspected of involvement in the November 29 clashes, to occur in the Lajan area or the broader Khabat district in the coming days.

4. **FORECAST:** Such a scenario will increase the risk of armed clashes between Herki tribe members and KRG security forces in the Khabat district. In addition, residents are liable to stage additional protests to denounce the KRG authorities' violent crackdown on the November 29 demonstration. Given precedent, protesters are likely to deliberately block the Erbil-Mosul Road to traffic with tire

fires or block the entrance to Lanaz Refinery. Such a scenario could temporarily disrupt operations at the facility. Authorities are liable to employ riot dispersal measures against such protests, including tear gas or rubber bullets. Regardless, should protests gain momentum, this is liable to cause periodic disruptions to the Erbil-Mosul Highway and delay the delivery of truck cargo, including fuel or gas.

5. **FORECAST:** Regardless, despite broader socioeconomic grievances among the KRG's public, the current dynamics are less likely to instigate a broader protest wave that would spread into Erbil city.

Recommendations:

1. Those operating or residing in KRG-administered areas are advised to avoid nonessential travel to Erbil Province's Khabat district in the coming days due to the risk of an escalation between KRG security forces and Herki tribe members, as well as the possibility of additional civil unrest.
2. Maintain heightened vigilance in the cities of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah while adhering to security precautions regarding protest activity and militant attacks.
3. Avoid nonessential travel to outlying areas beyond the cities of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, including KRG-administered territory in the Iraq-Turkey border region and the vicinity of the Iraq-Iran border due to militant activity and periodic Iranian attacks. Continue to avoid travel to strategic oil and gas facilities, especially the Khor Mor gas field in Sulaymaniyah.