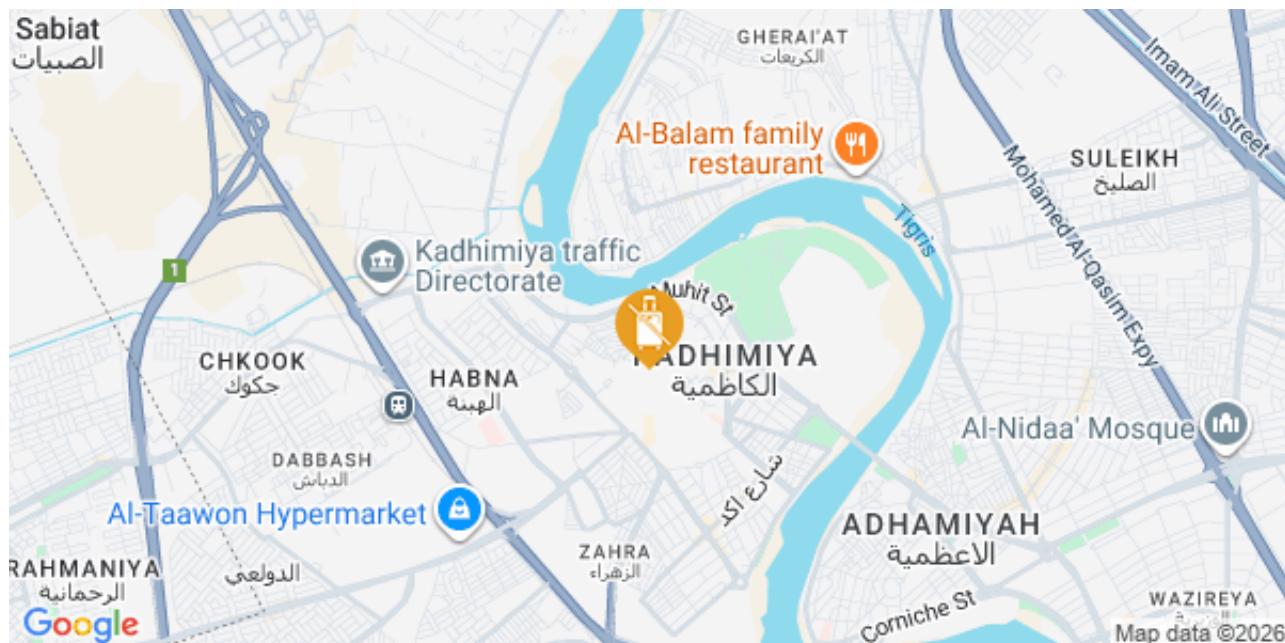




Travel



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JAN

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Iraq Tactical: Authorities implement heightened security measures in Baghdad ahead of January 14 pilgrimage to Kadhimiya; maintain heightened vigilance

Current Situation:

Shiite pilgrimage to Baghdad's Kadhimiya

- The Baghdad Operations Command on January 7 announced that authorities are implementing a security plan in the coming days to secure a Shiite pilgrimage to northern Baghdad's Kadhimiya.
- In the coming days, Shiite pilgrims are expected to enter Baghdad and march on foot to Kadhimiya as part of the "Rajab Pilgrimage". The event commemorates the anniversary of Imam Musa Al-Kadhim's martyrdom, which falls on January 14 this year.

Security measures

- The security plan focuses on securing roads and highways leading into Kadhimiya. According to the Baghdad Governorate, security forces will carry out security checks at over 50 entrances to Kadhimiya. Authorities will direct the influx of pilgrims by creating separate routes for vehicles and pedestrians. Traffic police will work to regulate traffic and reduce congestion.
- According to reports from January 11, authorities are implementing a weapons ban during the

Rajab Pilgrimage in Kadhimiya. Security forces are not planning major road closures in Baghdad, except for temporary road closures in Kadhimiya and Adhamiya. Security forces may implement such measures on an ad-hoc basis.

Suspension of work hours in Baghdad

- The government has decided to suspend working hours in Baghdad on January 15 to mark the anniversary of Imam Musa Al-Kadhim's martyrdom.

Source: [Baghdad Governorate](#)

Assessments & Forecast:

1. The yearly pilgrimage to Kadhimiya is an important event in Shiite traditions and attracts a significant number of pilgrims. For instance, an estimated 14 million visitors reportedly participated in the Rajab pilgrimage in January 2025. **FORECAST:** In the coming days, a similar number of Shiite believers can be expected to enter the capital from across Iraq and proceed towards Kadhimiya. The influx will likely peak on January 14, which marks the anniversary.
2. **FORECAST:** Security forces will likely implement measures such as ad-hoc checkpoints to direct the influx of pilgrims. Although authorities do not plan to implement significant road closures outside Kadhimiya and Adhamiya, security forces may implement them within Baghdad on short notice if deemed necessary.
3. The mass pilgrimage poses an underlying risk for security incidents, such as stampedes. Moreover, fringe actors and militant groups, such as Sunni extremists or the Islamic State (IS), may attempt to carry out terror attacks during the pilgrimage. Security incidents are not entirely unprecedented during the Rajab pilgrimage. For example, in [March 2021](#), unidentified perpetrators detonated a grenade near the pilgrims' march route in Baghdad's Adhamiya, wounding eight participants.
4. IS operatives maintain capabilities in Iraq and continue to plot attacks against Shiite pilgrims. In [August 2025](#), security forces foiled a plot by an IS network that allegedly planned to target Shiite Arbaeen pilgrims in Karbala with explosives. Against this background, Iraq's security apparatus will likely increase monitoring and conduct pre-emptive security operations around the capital in the coming days. Such operations are already underway as seen by the January 11 announcement by the Baghdad Operations Command regarding reconnaissance activities in the capital's environs, including Tarmiyah and Abu Ghraib.
5. **FORECAST:** Even though the threat of militancy will persist, the security forces' heightened alertness and their proven track record in securing the Rajab pilgrimage in recent years is likely to mitigate the threat of major security incidents materializing during the event.

Recommendations:

Those operating or residing in Baghdad on January 12 and over the coming days are advised to maintain heightened vigilance and allot for disruptions to travel across the city due to the expected influx of pilgrims and heightened security measures.