



Civil Unrest



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Iraq Alert (UPDATE): Rioters target US restaurants in central Baghdad following KH statement on June 3; additional acts of localized violence likely

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Current Situation:

June 3 Incidents:

- On June 3, senior Kataib Hezbollah (KH) official Abu Ali al-Askari issued a statement calling upon Iraq's public to "boycott and expel" US-linked enterprises and businesses, which he accused of serving as American "espionage agents" under the guise of "civilian titles".
- He stated that his objective could be achieved "without weapons".
- Al-Askari further urged members of Iraq's security forces not to "follow American orders" and called for increased monitoring and "caution" toward ambassadors of "countries hostile to Iraq".
- Later on [June 3](#), rioters stormed branches of two US restaurant chains on Baghdad's Palestine and Jadriya Streets, prompting security forces to deploy riot dispersal measures, reportedly including live fire. At least 12 suspects were detained.

Official Statements:

- On June 4, Iraq's Ministry of Interior (Mol) announced that it had arrested several individuals suspected of participating in previous attacks on US-linked restaurants and businesses in Baghdad between [May 28-May 30](#). Some of the arrestees were employed within Iraq's security apparatus.
- The Mol stated that it had formed teams of intelligence officials dedicated to identifying and arresting further individuals involved in the attacks.

Assessments & Forecast:

1. Al-Askari's statement underscores our previous assessment that the perpetrators of the recent violence against US-linked businesses are likely to be members or sympathizers of Iran-backed militias. His announcement highlights that KH is seeking to actively encourage Iraq's public to take action to terminate the presence of US-linked institutions in the country. His depiction of such entities as "espionage agents" is consistent with the Iran-backed militias' broader objective to undermine US influence in the country by framing Washington's presence as an infringement on Iraqi sovereignty and contradictory to Iraqi interests.
2. The fact that the June 3 riots erupted shortly after the publication of al-Askari's statement indicates that his call likely catalyzed the latest outbreak of violence. This points toward the influence of prominent Iran-backed Iraqi militias, including within Baghdad, whose calls to violence likely carry some weight with locals who are willing to engage in localized unrest against US-affiliated businesses.
3. **FORECAST:** Iran-backed militias may publish similar calls urging "resistance" against US interests over the coming days, rendering further incidents plausible. These are currently likely to remain localized in nature, deploying rudimentary means intended for intimidation purposes and to undermine the sense of security of Western organizations. However, it cannot be ruled out that this currently limited threat will evolve in response to developments in the Israel-Hamas conflict. This could materialize through the deployment of more lethal arms, which are widely proliferated in Baghdad, or through greater involvement of Iran-backed militias present in the city. However, there are no indications of this currently materializing. Additionally, as indicated by the detentions of suspects and the establishment of a dedicated team to preventing further incidents, Iraqi authorities remain motivated to mitigate these risks and prevent the threat of violence from deterring investment in the capital.

Recommendations:

1. Avoid nonessential travel to Baghdad due to the threat of militancy and civil unrest. Contact us at Operations@max-security.com or +44 20-3540-0434 for itinerary and contingency support.
2. Remain cognizant of the potential of further attacks on US-linked establishments and take necessary precautions to ensure security.
3. Westerners are advised to maintain a low profile and travel only with trained security personnel given the risk of attacks or kidnappings.
4. While traveling, regularly alter itinerary routes and avoid disclosing sensitive information to strangers, including your affiliation with foreign-based firms as your response could attract a negative reaction from locals.