



Militancy/Terrorism

20

JUL

15:22 UTC

Iraq Alert (UPDATE): IS claims suicide bombing at al-Waheilat market in Baghdad's Sadr City on July 19; shows IS's remaining operational capacity in capital

[Click here to view previous report](#)

Please be advised:

- The Islamic State (IS) claimed a suicide bombing attack at the al-Waheilat market in Sadr City in Baghdad on July 19. As per the claim, an IS operative detonated an explosive belt targeting “polytheist rejectionists”, a derogatory term used by the militants to describe Shiite Muslims.
- The attack has resulted in the killing of at least 35 civilians and the wounding of dozens of others.

Assessments & Forecasts:

1. Suicide bombing attacks in Baghdad are rare but not unprecedented. On [January 21](#), IS operatives conducted a twin suicide attack near central Baghdad's Tayaran Square, killing dozens. The latest attack, including a significant casualty toll, showcases IS's remaining operational capabilities to conduct high-profile attacks within Baghdad's perimeter. This particularly pertains to the capital's northeastern outskirts, which border the Diyala Province, where the militants are heavily entrenched. These are also the areas where security forces' presence and protocols are significantly low compared to central Baghdad.
2. The timing of the attack is especially notable as Muslims celebrated the Day of Arafah on July 19 which is considered the holiest day in the Islamic calendar. It falls on the ninth day of the month of Dhu al-Hijjah, the second day of the Hajj pilgrimage, and a day before the start of the Eid al-Adha holiday. IS is known to seek to carry out more high-profile attacks during such occasions which bears religious symbolism and importance. IS has thus likely dedicated significant efforts to be able to carry out a timely attack during this day. The targeting of a civilian market in a Shiite area further points to the militants' objective of deliberately targeting Iraqi citizens based on their adherence to Shiite Islam.
3. **FORECAST:** Iraqi security forces will likely seek to bolster their security protocols and presence throughout Baghdad, particularly in the northern outskirts where many Shiite communities reside. This may include the setting up of checkpoints closures throughout the city. However, as evidenced by IS's continued ability to operate in the Iraqi capital, additional high-profile attacks by the militant group, particularly during the current holiday period, cannot be ruled out.

Recommendations:

1. It is advised to avoid all nonessential travel to Baghdad at this time due to the ongoing threat of militancy in the capital, violence in areas surrounding the city, and the risk of a broad deterioration of security conditions.
2. For those conducting essential operations in Baghdad, it is advised to restrict travel to the Green Zone and ensure that contingency and emergency evacuation plans are updated. Contact us for itinerary and contingency support options.
3. Foreigners, particularly Westerners, continuing to operate in Iraq are additionally advised to maintain a low profile, exercise heightened vigilance, and avoid locales frequented by foreign, particularly Western nationals. To mitigate the risk of attacks or abductions, ensure that places of stay are equipped with sufficient perimeter security details, alter travel routes, and avoid disclosing sensitive itinerary information to unknown individuals. As a general security precaution, avoid revealing to strangers your position or affiliation with foreign-based firms, as your response could attract a negative reaction from locals.
4. As a general precaution, it is advised that any travel, particularly in outlying areas, be conducted in armored vehicles, with proper security escorts and coordination with authorities.