

Iraq Bulletin: June 2014 is compiled by Elayne Jude for Great North News Service

We began this new series with a concise assessment of developments in Iraq since the fall of Saddam in 2003, followed by our first monthly bulletin for May 2014. Our aim was to present a rounded portrait of a developing society, plagued by sectarian violence, but also undergoing real social and economic change.

On June 10, the extraordinary and unforeseen military initiatives of Isis and the apparent collapse of the Iraqi army made us wonder quite what we could do with this planned regular report. Normal life has been suspended. Large parts of the country are in the frontline, or under occupation, or preparing for extreme eventualities. We decided simply to follow the stories dominating the headlines in Iraq.

#### Help from Hezbollah

In 2003, Hezbollah created Unit 3800, whose sole purpose was to support Iraqi Shiite militant groups targeting multinational forces in Iraq. Now Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah offers to send more fighters to Iraq. On June 17, Nasrallah announced that "We are ready to sacrifice martyrs in Iraq five times more than what we sacrificed in Syria in order to protect shrines," noting that Iraqi holy sites "are much more important" than Shiite shrines in Syria, where Hezbollah forces have helped sustain the Assad regime.

In Iraq, unlike Syria, where it is heavily committed, Hezbollah would likely dispatch limited numbers of trainers and special operators. It is already active in the country. The group's highly specialised skills and experience would have an impact disproportionate to its size. A 2009 Australian government report concluded that "Hezbollah has established an insurgent capability in Iraq, engaging in assassinations, kidnappings and bombings. The Hezbollah units have been set up with the encouragement and resources of Iran's Revolutionary Guards al-Qods Brigades." A 2010 Pentagon reported that Unit 3800 gave special operations militias "the training, tactics and technology to conduct kidnappings [and] small unit tactical operations," and to "employ sophisticated improvised explosive devices (IEDs), incorporating lessons learned from operations in Southern Lebanon."

Since the Coalition withdrawal from Iraq, Unit 3800 has been active in Yemen, working with Qods to help the Houthis, a Zaidi Shiite insurgent group fighting the Yemeni government.

### Refugee Camps Expanding: Costs Unmet

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has expanded a refugee camp and increased humanitarian aid in northern Iraq. Up to 10,000 people fled from the Christian majority town of Qaraqosh, also called Hamdaniya, in late June, almost a quarter of the town's population. Qaraqosh is 30 km south-east of Mosul 500,000 people have reportedly fled from Mosul since the Isis takeover. Many fled to Iraqi Kurdistan, where more camps are under construction to accommodate the growing need.

UNHCR has helped to expand the Garmawa camp in Dohok, now sheltering more than 1,000 displaced people. Tents, mattresses and hygiene kits have been distributed at schools and community centres in Erbil which the displaced are occupying. It is estimated that the camps require immediate funding of around about \$64.2 million but only received eight percent of the funding is in place. UNHCR estimates that 1.2 million Iraqis have been displaced so far this year.

### Isis: Economic Boycott

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov announced plans to request the UN Security Council (UNSC) to impose an economic boycott on oil produced on the territories seized by the insurgency, including Isis. UNSC adopted a similar resolution on Libya during the civil war there, advocating the boycott of oil from the rebel-controlled territories.

The UNSC has not yet reached consensus on whether or not to list the ISIL as a terrorist organisation.

### Oil, Trade and Disinformation

The Trebil crossing, in Anbar province, Jordan, was rumoured to have fallen to insurgents in late June. The official Iraqi news agency rushed to deny it.

Trebil is the only gateway for Iraqi oil to Jordan. Iraqi merchants also bring goods back to Iraq through the Jordanian port of Aqaba, then on through Trebil; clothing and electrical items from China, ceramics and appliances from Spain and Italy, food from Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and vegetables from Jordan.

Iraq also has busy crossings with Turkey and Iran, and lesser crossings with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Basra's ports are relied on for Iraq's global imports. Trebil crossing is mainly an export crossing, whose shipping fees are more expensive than at other ports. Post 2003, lack of security in Anbar province allowed armed militias to control chunks of the Iraq/Jordan highway. Recently the Trebil crossing regained some of its commercial importance.

Port director Brigadier General Ali al-Asadi denied news agency reports that the port is in the hands of terrorists, adding that the news is "a part of psychological warfare and media rumour broadcast by the media in support of international terrorism. "

The director of the port said, "Trebil border crossing with Jordan is under control, and the traffic did not stop at all, indicating that the security forces in high alert since the recent security incidents in the country."

Meanwhile in Parliament

In Baghdad, the Wataniyah bloc nominated MP, Saleem al-Jobouri, for the parliamentary Speaker's post.

MP Mohammed al-Karbouli, of the Motahidoin Alliance headed by the former Speaker, Osama al-Nijaifi, responded: "Motahidoin Alliance and the other blocs nominated Nijaifi and Jobouri for the parliament Speaker's post where both of them are not supported by the majority of the Sunni political blocs."

A few days previously, Mr al-Jobouri, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, had handed himself over to the judiciary to answer allegations of terrorism.

with thanks to the Iraq Sun, Iraqi News, Iraq Daily, National Iraqi News Agency, Al-Monitor.com, Voice of Iraq