

1 May 27: **Demonstrators Attempt to Storm the Shrine of the Martyr Sadr in Najaf.** Demonstrators in Najaf, Najaf Province, reportedly attempted to storm the Shrine of the Martyr Muhammed Sadiq al-Sadr and his sons after rumors circulated online indicating that Umm Muhannad, a woman who had previously insulted nationalist Shi'a cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, was kidnapped and being held at the shrine. Sadrists militiamen killed Muhannad al-Qaisi, her son, at a protest in February, leading Umm Muhannad to call for Moqtada al-Sadr to turn over the men responsible. Reports circulated on May 27 that she had been kidnapped. A group of unidentified young men clashed with unspecified security forces after they attempted to enter the graveyard associated with the shrine to find Umm Muhannad. They did not successfully enter the shrine.

2 May 27: **Iraqi Government Announces It Will Reopen Basra's Shalamcheh Border Crossing to Imports with Iran to Bolster Iranian Economy.** The Government of Iraq announced that it will reopen the Shalamcheh border crossing in Basra Province to trade with Iran "next week," without further specification. The government closed the Shalamcheh border crossing and four other border crossings to Iranian imports on March 8 due to COVID-19 precautionary measures. On May 11, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani asked Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi in a telephone conversation to accelerate procedures to open borders to Iranian imports to boost the struggling Iranian economy.

3 May 28: **Kadhimi Swaps Commander in Chief of Iraq's Ground Forces with Desert Operations Commander.** Brigadier General Yahya Rasool, Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi's military spokesperson, announced that Kadhimi appointed Major General Ahmed Salim Bahgat Al-Otaibi to head the Jazeera and Badia (Desert) Operations Command. Otaibi previously held the position of commander in chief of the ground forces, which is now held by previous Jazeera Operations Commander Major General Qassim al-Muhammadi.

4 May 28: **Prime Minister Kadhimi and President Salih Meet to Discuss Delayed Cabinet Appointments.** Iraqi President Barham Salih met with new Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi to discuss filling Kadhimi's cabinet, which is seven ministers short of completion. Salih urged Kadhimi to quickly nominate "efficient and impartial personalities," according to a readout from his office. Iraq's parliament rejected Kadhimi's nominees for the ministries of trade, agriculture, justice, culture, and migration and displacement, likely because of disagreements over how to divide state spoils. Parliament has yet to vote on nominees for the key ministries of oil and foreign affairs. All cabinet positions were reportedly going to be filled before Eid al-Fitr on May 23. However, Fahad al-Jubouri, a member of Ammar al-Hakim's Wisdom Trend bloc, told Kurdish news outlet Rudaw that the vote will be postponed for another month until political blocs reach an agreement.

5 May 30: **Iraq Implements Weeklong Lockdown to Limit Spread of COVID-19.** The Supreme Committee for Health and National Safety and the COVID-19 Parliamentary Crisis Cell decided to implement a weeklong lockdown across Iraq in a meeting held on May 30. The ban went into place on May 31 and will last until June 6. In a statement, the office of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi announced that the decision banned all public gatherings and required that all Iraqis wear a mask outside their homes. The General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers issued a statement outlining exceptions to the ban. The exceptions include Iraq's most prominent banks, as well as food sales, restaurant delivery, and employees in the health, security, electricity, municipalities, agriculture, and media sectors.

6 May 31: **Trade Ministry Says Iraq is Running Out of Food for Rationing Program, Calls for Additional Funding.** Iraq's trade ministry said it has only 190,000 tons of rice left in its storage for the rest of 2020. The program requires 1-1.25 million tons per year. The ministry called for emergency funding despite Iraq's budget crisis because many Iraqis are "struggling to provide their daily food due to tough economic conditions amid the coronavirus crisis." The ministry previously requested additional funds, which it did not receive, in March 2020 to build a three-month strategic stockpile of wheat and rice to prepare for the coronavirus pandemic.

7 June 1-3: **Kurdistan Regional Government Cancels Lockdown following Mass Protests over Economic Impact.** The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) instituted a full lockdown on June 1 that was supposed to last through June 6 to stem the spreading coronavirus. However, demonstrations broke out in Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, and smaller towns across Iraqi Kurdistan on June 1 to protest the lack of work and generally poor economic conditions under the lockdown. These protests led the KRG to lift the lockdown on June 3. Businesses like restaurants, hotels, and gyms will be allowed to reopen with mandatory wearing of masks and other health requirements.

8 Jun 1: **US Ambassador Meets with Defense and Electricity Ministers to Discuss Joint Defense Cooperation and US Investment in Iraq.** US Ambassador to Iraq Matthew Tueller met with Iraqi Energy Minister Majid Mahdi at the Ministry of Electricity in Baghdad to discuss US support for Iraqi energy and economic investment. Tueller emphasized the willingness of American companies to help "develop and rehabilitate" Iraq's electrical grid. Mahdi emphasized that "the door is open" for companies from all friendly countries to invest in Iraq's "promising" energy sector, according to a readout from the Ministry of Electricity. Mahdi also praised the US sanctions waivers that allow Iraq to continue importing electricity from Iran. The next sanctions waiver is set to expire in September; its renewal is contingent on Iraqi investments from Iranian energy reliance. Tueller also met with new Iraqi Defense Minister Jumaa Inad at the Ministry of Defense in Baghdad. The two discussed joint cooperation for training and logistical support for Iraqi Security Forces in their efforts to defeat ISIS, according to a readout from the Iraqi Ministry of Defense.

9 Jun 1: **Iranian Ambassador Meets with Planning and Finance Ministers to Discuss Energy Cooperation and Economic Ties between Iraq and Iran.** Iranian Ambassador to Iraq Eraj Masjedi met with new Iraqi Planning Minister Khaled Battal to discuss increasing the volume of trade between Iraq and Iran. They also discussed joint attempts to fight the coronavirus and "energy cooperation," according to a readout from the Ministry of Planning. Masjedi also met with new Iraqi Finance Minister Ali Allawi to discuss bolstering economic ties between their countries. Masjedi congratulated Allawi on his appointment and delivered an invitation from Iranian Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Farhad Dejpasand for Allawi to visit Iran, according to the Islamic Republic News Agency. Masjedi likely met with both ministers to lay the groundwork for energy and economic deals Iran is attempting to make with Iraq before the US-Iraq Strategic Dialogue in mid-June.

10 Jun 1: **Fifty MPs Reportedly Form a New Parliamentary Bloc to Support Prime Minister Kadhimi.** State of Law Coalition Member of Parliament (MP) Hussein Arab said in a press release that 50 MPs in Iraq's parliament, the Council of Representatives (CoR), were forming a new parliamentary bloc to transcend ethno-sectarian and political divides and provide political support to the government and efforts of new Iraq Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi. Kadhimi, an independent, has no political base.

11 Jun 1: **[RUMINT] Two Badr Members and One Maliki Ally Compete to Direct the Office of the Prime Minister.** An anonymous political source said to be close to Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi told Iraqi news outlet Shafaq that there were three candidates competing for the powerful position of director of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). The three candidates are two senior members of the Iranian proxy Badr Organization, Mohammed al-Ghabban and Abu Maryam al-Ansari, and Raed Johi, an individual described as close to former Prime Minister and Leader of the parliamentary State of Law Coalition Nouri al-Maliki. The source said Johi is considered most likely to secure the nomination because he is not explicitly affiliated with a political party.

12 Jun 2: **US Ambassador Meets with Kurdistan Regional Government PM and President, Says Kurdistan Region to Participate in US-Iraq Strategic Dialogue.** US Ambassador to Iraq Tueller met with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Masrour Barzani, in Erbil, Arbil Province. Tueller confirmed that the KRG will participate in the US-Iraq Strategic Dialogue slated to begin in mid-June. Prime Minister Barzani emphasized in a statement that the results of the Strategic Dialogue must be "in the public interest of all components of Iraq." Tueller also met with KRG President Nechirvan Barzani to discuss the dialogue, security cooperation, and the Kurdish response to the coronavirus. President Barzani emphasized Kurdish support for Kadhimi's government, the dialogue, and the swift completion of Kadhimi's cabinet.

13 Jun 2: **Kadhimi Reportedly Establishes Another Investigation into the Killing of Protesters.** An anonymous political source told Iraqi news outlet al Sumaria that Prime Minister Kadhimi is establishing a new unit to investigate the killing of demonstrators in Baghdad and Southern Iraq. The investigation will cover all killings and the use of live ammunition, lethal tear gas canisters, and extra-judicial arrests. The investigation will consider the results of previous investigations but will "start from scratch" with its own findings for "large and dangerous" incidents. The unit will reportedly look into prominent political and security figures, including former Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mehdi. The source said that the results of the investigation will be handed over to the judicial system within 90 days, but that the investigation has not yet begun due to "political differences" and Kadhimi's incomplete cabinet.



- Iraqi Security Forces
- ISIS
- Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)
- Major Cities
- Anti-ISIS Coalition
- Iran
- Iraqi Council of Representatives
- Demonstration
- Iranian Proxy Militias
- Religious Figures
- Iraqi Prime Minister and Cabinet

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Key Takeaway: Economic and diplomatic competition between the United States and Iran is ramping up as both sides attempt to control the conditions leading up to the US-Iraq Strategic Dialogue in mid-June. Iran seeks to ensure that Iraq continues to import Iranian energy, a key economic driver for Iran's sanctions-battered economy. Iraq relies on those imports to bolster its under-funded, often-strained electrical grid. The United States is aiming to reduce Iraqi reliance on Iranian imports by encouraging investments by US and allied companies and leveraging its sanctions waivers. Meanwhile, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi is capitalizing on what appears to be a grace period granted to him by the United States and Iran to work with both sides and secure Iraq's energy and defense requirements.

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