

# Iraq Situation Report: November 3 - 9, 2015

**1 Heavy Coalition airstrikes target ISIS as Kurdish offensive stalls.** Clashes between Iraqi Kurdish forces and ISIS continued in Sinjar district, west of Mosul, while Coalition airstrikes increased. However, a local KDP-affiliated militia leader stated that the Peshmerga offensive was on hold due to disagreements between the KDP and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).



**2 ISF continues to resist pressure by ISIS in key western Anbar district.** ISF cleared areas north and east of Haditha district northwest of Ramadi on November 4, killing four ISIS attackers wearing SVESTs. These areas are frequently contested by ISIS. ISIS attacked Albu Hiyat area, east of Haditha, on November 7 using a total of nine SVBIEDs and SVESTs. ISF repelled the attack which left 11 ISF members wounded.



**3 ISF repelled attack by ISIS north of Ramadi and continue to encircle the city.** ISF continued clearing operations north of Ramadi supported by Coalition airstrikes, though operations were interrupted by heavy rainfall. ISIS attacked ISF positions north of Ramadi on November 6 with up to four VBIEDs killing one and injuring four soldiers. ISF cleared al-Madhiq area east of Ramadi on November 3 and clashed with ISIS at Ramadi's "western entrance" on November 5.



**4 PM Abadi musters support for reform agenda.**

PM Haidar al-Abadi met with leaders from the Shi'a political formation National Alliance and the Sunni political formation Etihad on November 3 to discuss reforms and the economic crisis. PM Abadi visited Najaf on November 7 to visit with Sadrist Trend leader Muqtada al-Sadr and Shi'a religious authorities, excluding Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, to discuss corruption, the anti-ISIS fight, and the reform program.

**5 Demonstrators continue protests against corruption and salary scale changes.** Protesters demonstrated against changes to the salary scale and government corruption on November 6 in Babil, Basra, Diwaniyah, Dhi Qar, Karbala, Maysan, Muthanna, Najaf, and Wasit. Protesters in Baghdad attempted to enter the Green Zone, but security forces blocked the entrances. The Shi'a religious authority's representative denounced attempts to use the law to circumvent or delay reforms and the CoR "procrastination" in implementing PM Abadi's reform program.



**6 ISIS launched a deadly attack behind Peshmerga lines.** ISIS attacked the government building in Dibis district, northwest of Kirkuk, detonating between two and four SVESTs on November 3. Peshmerga regained control of the town following clashes with ISIS gunmen.



**7 ISIS attacked recently-recaptured town near Baiji.** ISIS attacked Siniya and the Siniya airport, west of Baiji, using up to four VBIEDs and one SVEST on November 5. Federal Police (FP) and proxy militias repelled the attack. At least 5 FP members were killed. ISIS shelled al-Salam village, south of Baiji, killing at least three "Popular Mobilization" members.



**8 ISIS resurges in desert areas west of Samarra.** IA Aviation strikes destroyed an ISIS bulldozer and a car laden with explosives in Sharif Abbas area, northwest of Samarra on November 4. ISIS gunmen attacked a FP station on November 8 in Mkaishifah, northwest of Samarra killing five FP members.



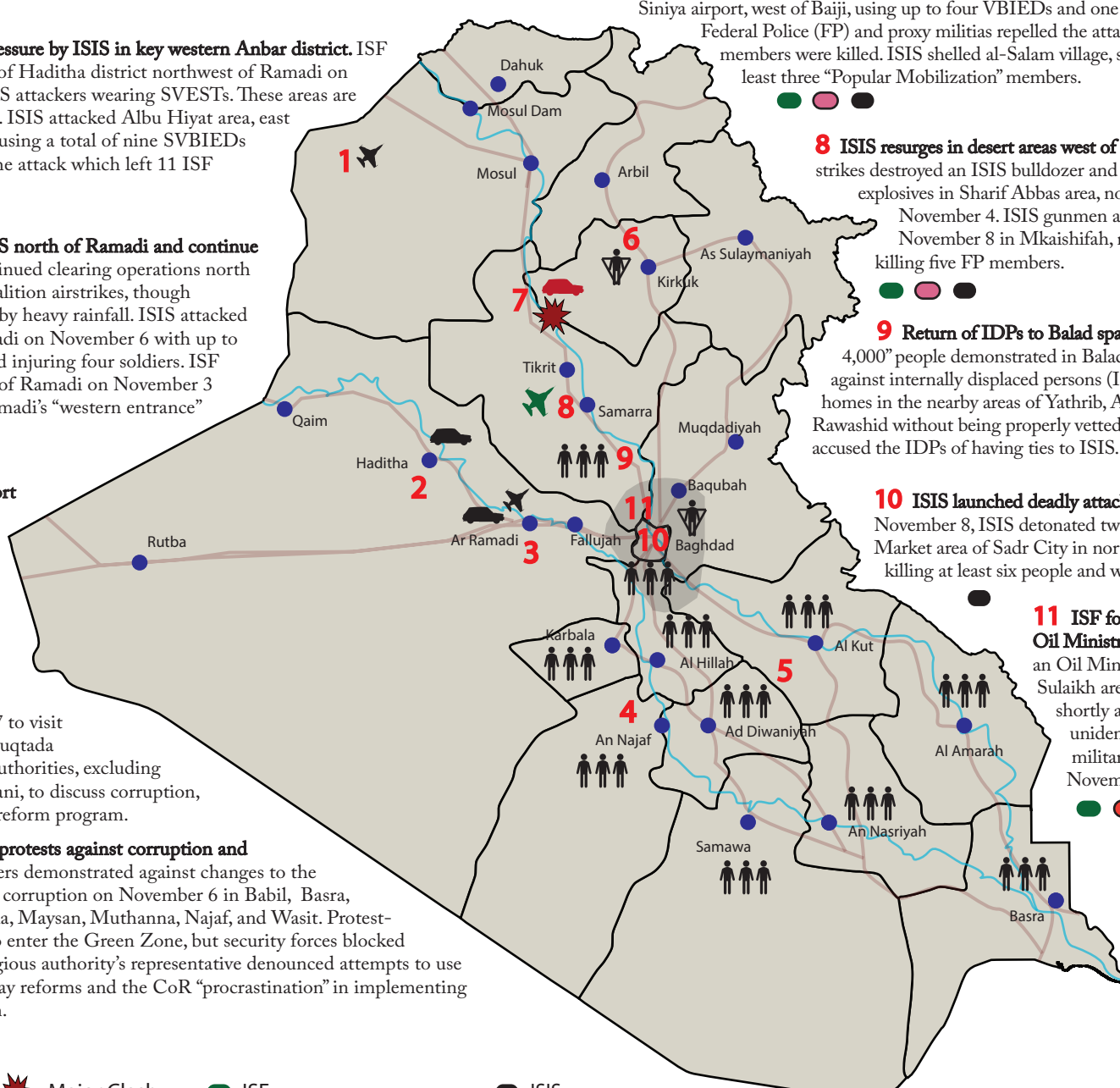
**9 Return of IDPs to Balad sparks unrest.** "About 4,000" people demonstrated in Balad, southeast of Samarra, against internally displaced persons (IDPs) returning to their homes in the nearby areas of Yathrib, Aziz Balad, and Rawashid without being properly vetted. Some demonstrators accused the IDPs of having ties to ISIS.



**10 ISIS launched deadly attack in Sadr City.** On November 8, ISIS detonated two SVESTs in Qayyarah Market area of Sadr City in northeastern Baghdad, killing at least six people and wounding 21 others.



**11 ISF foil abduction of senior Oil Ministry official.** ISF rescued an Oil Ministry director general in Sulaikh area of northern Baghdad shortly after he was abducted by unidentified gunmen in military uniforms on November 4.



- Major Cities
- Major Clash
- ISF
- ISIS
- VBIED
- Iraqi Airstrikes
- Peshmerga
- PKK
- SVEST
- Airstrikes
- Iraqi Shi'a militias
- Unknown Gunmen
- Parade
- Coalition
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes

Content: Patrick Martin and ISW Iraq Team  
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ISIS demonstrated resurgent capabilities in nominally secure areas. An uptick in clashes and airstrikes on ISIS targets west and northwest of Samarra indicate that ISIS still maintains attack capabilities on the western bank of the Tigris River in Salah al-Din province. In addition, ISIS contested control of the strategic sub-district of Siniya, west of Baiji, and launched explosive attacks against Peshmerga-controlled Dibis district in northwestern Kirkuk, Haditha district in western Anbar, and Sadr City in northeastern Baghdad using explosive attacks. The attacks demonstrate that clearing operations and the heavy presence of security forces have failed to fully dislodge ISIS in cleared areas or prevent it from launching attacks. Anti-ISIS operations have faced several limiting factors in contrast to ISIS's freedom of action. Inclement weather and heavy rains near Ramadi compounded the effects of ISIS's mobile defenses against the already-slow ISF efforts to recapture the northern bank of the Euphrates River north of Ramadi. Meanwhile, internal differences between Kurdish factions in Sinjar district, namely the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), have reportedly been to blame for the stalled offensive. The PKK and KDP rivalry in Sinjar may mean that a concerted effort to recapture Sinjar are unlikely begin in the near future. Meanwhile, an Iraqi Shi'a militia was likely responsible for the abduction of a senior member of the Oil Ministry, which is headed by a senior member of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI). It is unclear what militia was responsible for the kidnapping, but the incident shows the impunity with which militias operate in Baghdad.

PM Haidar al-Abadi has made a concerted effort to generate support for his reform agenda since the Council of Representatives (CoR) revoked his ability to pass reforms without CoR approval on November 2. It is unclear why PM Abadi did not meet with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani or his representative during his visit to Najaf on November 7, as Sistani remains supportive of the reform agenda. The reduction in PM Abadi's independence and capacity to pass unilateral reforms will likely lead to greater reliance on the approval of Sistani and political blocs opposed to Maliki. PM Abadi's meeting with Sadrist Trend leader Muqtada al-Sadr likely indicates that PM Abadi will need to rely even more on the support of the Sadrist Trend – as well as the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, the other Shi'a political formation opposed to Maliki – to generate the necessary votes in the CoR to pass reforms.