

# Iraq Situation Report: September 4 - 8, 2015

**1 Turkish security forces launch “short-term” operation against PKK in northern Iraq.** Anonymous Turkish officials stated that Turkish Special Forces crossed the Iraq-Turkey border in pursuit of PKK fighters on September 8. The operation follows a September 6 PKK IED attack on Turkish security forces on the Iraq-Turkey border in Hakkari province that killed 14 Turkish police members. Heavy Turkish airstrikes struck PKK targets in northern Iraq on September 7 and 8.

**5 F-16s enter service in Iraq.** On September 6, Defense Minister Khalid al-Obeidi stated that F16 aircraft had entered service as part of Iraq’s Air Force and conducted 15 air sorties, including a strike on an ISIS gathering north of Baiji on September 2 and strikes on an ISIS bridge and facilities in Hawija, southwest of Kirkuk. US DOD congratulated Iraq for its “successful use” of the aircraft.

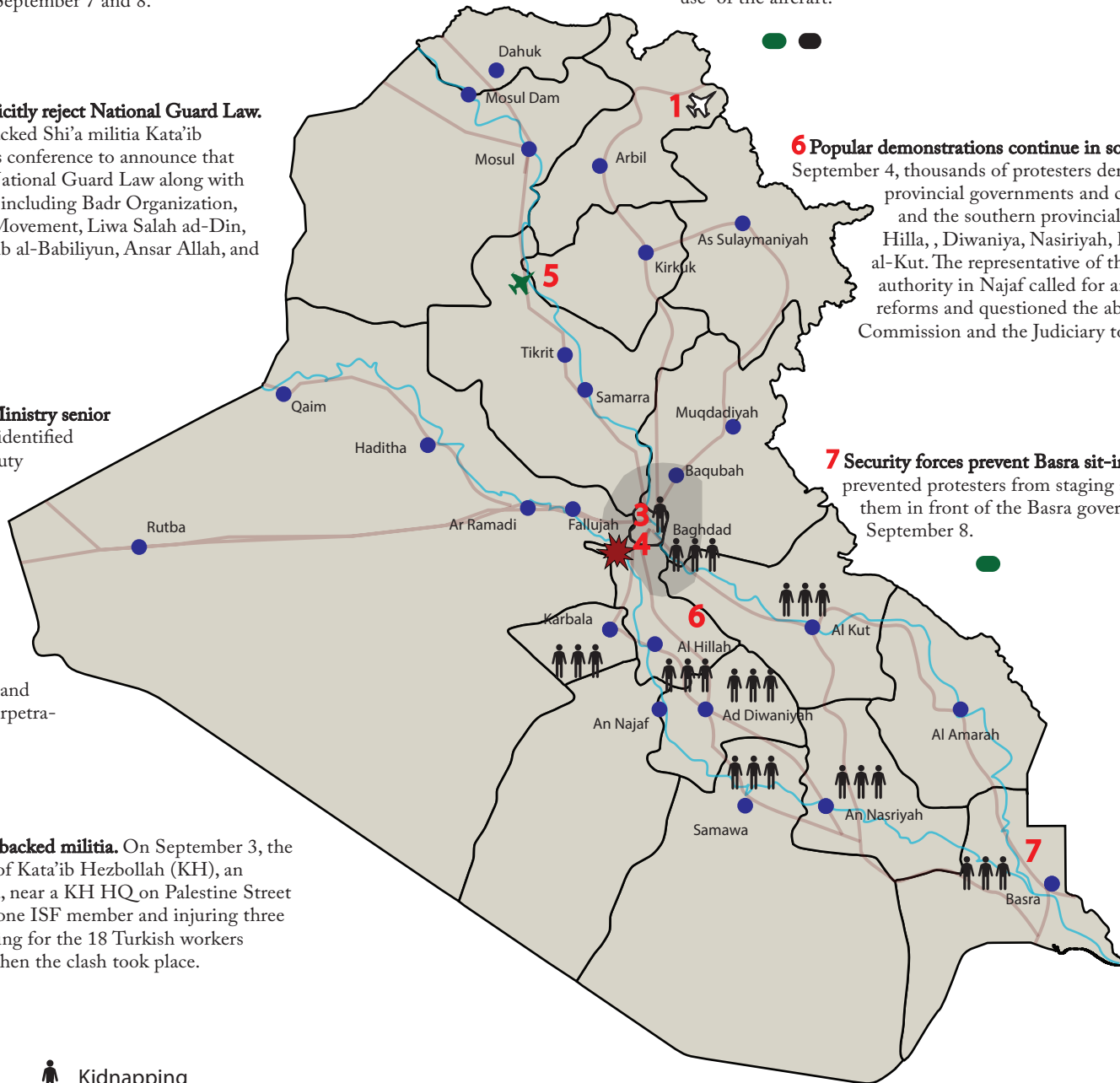
**2 Iranian proxy militias explicitly reject National Guard Law.** A senior figure in Iranian-backed Shi’a militia Kata’ib Hezbollah (KH) held a press conference to announce that KH explicitly opposed the National Guard Law along with fellow Iranian proxy militias including Badr Organization, Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq, Nujaba Movement, Liwa Salah ad-Din, Kata’ib Jund al-Imam, Kata’ib al-Babiliyun, Ansar Allah, and Harakat Sayed al-Shuhada.

**6 Popular demonstrations continue in southern Iraq.** On September 4, thousands of protesters demonstrated against provincial governments and corruption in Baghdad and the southern provincial capitals of Basra, Hilla, Diwaniya, Nasiriyah, Karbala, Samawa, and al-Kut. The representative of the Shi’a religious authority in Najaf called for anti-corruption reforms and questioned the ability of the Integrity Commission and the Judiciary to fight corruption.

**3 Gunmen kidnap Justice Ministry senior official.** On September 8, unidentified gunmen kidnapped the Deputy Minister of Justice and Director of General Investigations, a member of the Shi’a Fadhlila Party, and four others in Bunug area in eastern Baghdad. The gunmen later released the other four persons. Forces under Baghdad Operations Command continue to search for the perpetrators.

**7 Security forces prevent Basra sit-in.** Security forces prevented protesters from staging a sit-in and harassed them in front of the Basra governorate building on September 8.

**4 ISF clashes with Iranian-backed militia.** On September 3, the ISF clashed with members of Kata’ib Hezbollah (KH), an Iranian-backed Shi’a militia, near a KH HQ on Palestine Street in eastern Baghdad, killing one ISF member and injuring three others. The ISF were searching for the 18 Turkish workers abducted on September 2 when the clash took place.



- Major Cities
- Kidnapping
- ★ Major Clash
- ✈ Iraqi Airstrikes
- ✈ Turkish Airstrikes
- Turkey
- Iraqi Shi’a militias
- ISF
- PKK
- ISIS

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Iranian-backed Shi’a militias are challenging PM Abadi’s authority through political means and the use of force in the wake of PM Abadi’s recent reforms. The proxy groups’ obstruction of the National Guard Law further limits the government’s ability to subordinate the militias to the control of the state. The National Guard Law is legislation that is critical to empowering Iraqi Sunnis by arming them and organizing them in the fight against ISIS. The Iranian-backed militias have also used violence in Baghdad in ways that challenge the government’s control of the capital. The militias are likely responsible for an emerging trend of kidnappings, including Iraqi government figures and Turkish workers. Gunmen likely from Kata’ib Hezbollah, a prominent Iranian-backed militia, also clashed with ISF from the Baghdad Operations Command. The proxies’ unchecked aggression against the ISF and attempts to obstruct the Iraqi legislative system may signal the further erosion of state authority over the militias. The Iraqi government has limited options to put down the militias in Baghdad because it faces numerous security challenges at this time, including the threat of ISIS, potential unrest among protesters in southern Iraq, and a developing trend of Turkish incursions into northern Iraq to chase the PKK. The ISF’s efforts to suppress an anti-government demonstration this week in Basra may represent an inflection point in light of PM Abadi’s previous orders that the ISF serve to protect the demonstrators. It will be important to monitor the Iraqi government’s ability to enforce orders in Basra and other areas far from Baghdad where security forces are thin and the potential for PM Abadi’s rivals to instigate insecurity is high.