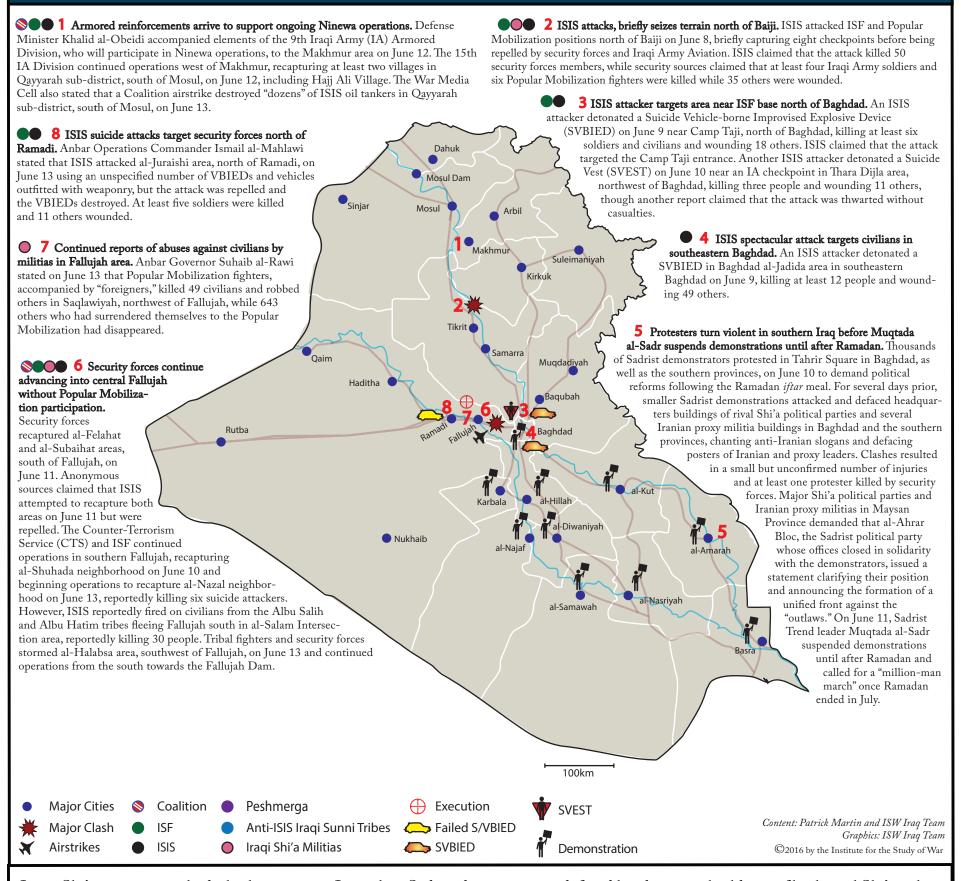


Iraq Situation Report: June 8 - 13, 2016



Intra-Shi'a tensions reached a boiling point in Iraq when Sadrist demonstrators defaced headquarters buildings of both rival Shi'a political parties and at least one Iranian proxy militia in Baghdad and southern Iraq. The demonstrations, which began on Ramadan on June 6, were small and not likely centrally coordinated; some demonstrators defaced the headquarters buildings of al-Ahrar Bloc, the Sadrist Trend's main political party. The violent attacks are particularly destabilizing as security forces are preoccupied with the Fallujah operation and securing the country from ISIS attacks – a serious threat during Ramadan. Iraq's major Shi'a parties, including the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), Fadhila, and the State of Law Alliance, as well as Iranian proxy groups like Kata'ib Hezbollah and the Badr Organization, denounced the attacks, as did Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi. The wide-spread rejection of the demonstrators' methods, likely combined with strong pressure from Iran, forced Muqtada al-Sadr to call off demonstrations until after Ramadan. Some small demonstrations may continue due to the Sadrist Trend's large size and lack of discipline, but the suspension of demonstrations underscores the serious nature of the threat of intra-Shi'a conflict. Meanwhile, security forces continue to make progress in recapturing central Fallujah without participation from the Popular Mobilization. However, reports of civilian abuses continue to emerge, indicating that the area may remain unstable for an extended period of time and vulnerable to ISIS resurgence. This risk may amplify if sectarian violence continues and Iraqi Shi'a militias retain a long-term presence in the Fallujah area.