



North Iraq Security Overview October to Mid-November 2018

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Glossary

EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party
SGBV	Sexual & Gender Based Violence
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IS	Islamic State
KRG	Kurdish Regional Government
KR	Kurdish Region
HPE	Ezidkham Protection Units
YBS	Yazidi Sinjar Resistant Unit

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Sources of information include Mercy Corp Humanitarian Access Team (MC HAT), INSO, and websites including, but not exclusive, Institute for the Study of War, Chatham House, Human Rights Watch, Al Jazeera, SouthFront, Rudaw, Al-Monitor, iMMAP, and Reliefweb.

In the text when '*Comment: ...*' appears in *italic* and the subsequent text is also in *italic*, this information is not fact, but the opinion of the author.

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Locations	Risk Level	Comment	Forecast
Erbil, Duhok, Sulaymaniyah, Zokho and routes between the cities but within the KRG borders (except those areas assessed as High).	Moderate	<i>Whilst threats faced by INGOs in these areas would suggest the Risk Level is Low, uncertainty remains over the future relationship between the KFG & the Bagdad government. Kurdish political parties might be in a strong position to benefit from a new government in Bagdad & thereby improve access to the KRG.</i>	<i>*Turkish military & PKK clashes will continue, as will Turkish airstrikes. *Despite political tensions following the election results, there will be little change in the governance of KR.</i>
Kirkuk Governorate, Hawijah Governorate, Mosel, Telafar, Sinjar Districts, within 10km of Turkey and Iran border.	High	<i>INGOs are operating in these areas & international staff do visit. However, strong Security Operating Procedures, Contingency Plans & well trained competent staff are essential. Agencies must also have a high risk threshold and strong resilience.</i>	<i>*No improvements in the poor security of the listed locations is expected for the near to medium future. *Harassment of INGO staff likely to increase as INGOs areas of operations grow. *Risk Levels will most probably remain high.</i>

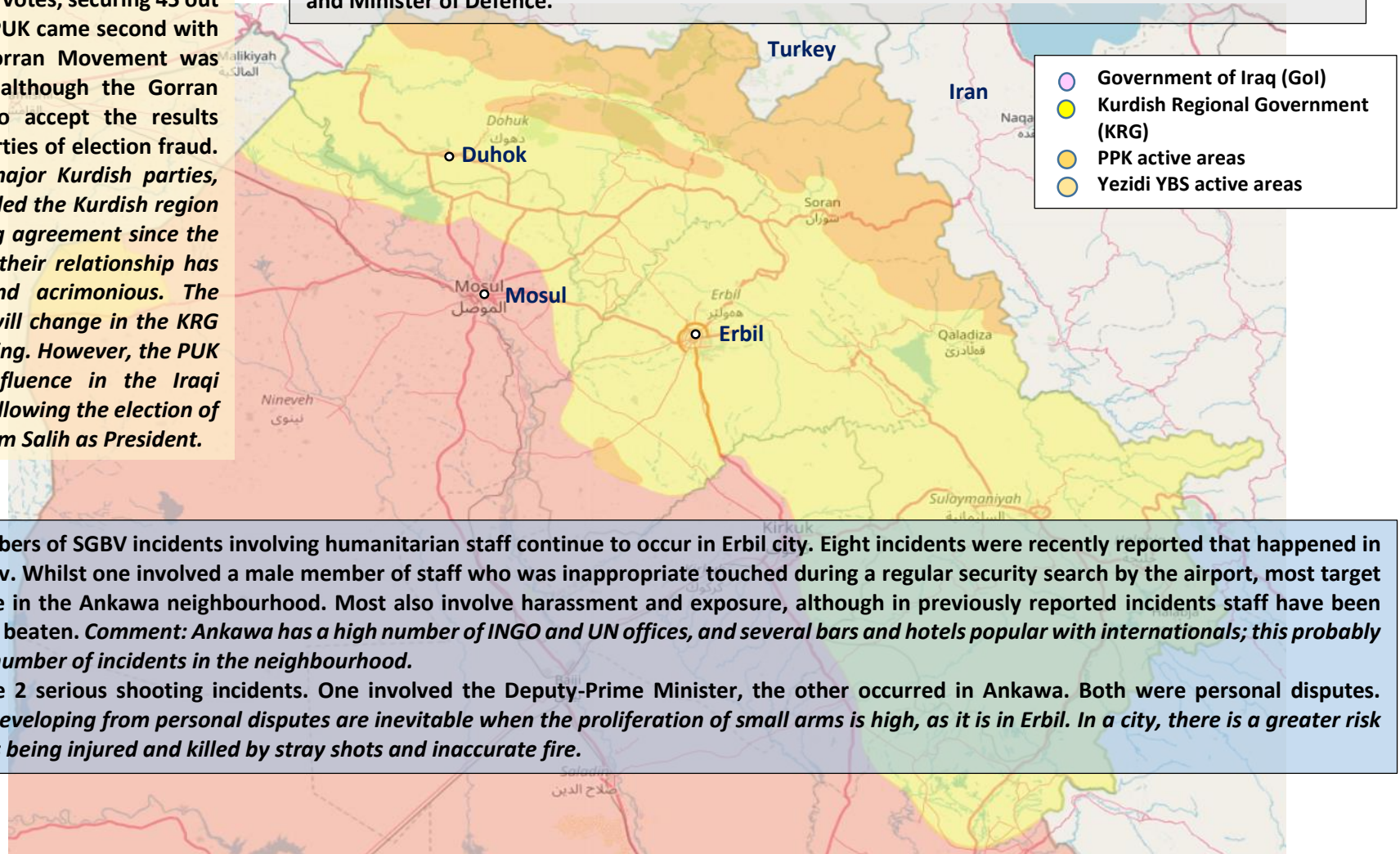
1. Political and Conflict Summary

(Map Source <http://syriancivilwarmap.com>)

KURDISH REGION'S NEW GOVERNMENT

The Kurdish Region in north Iraq is governed with a large degree of autonomy from Iraq's federal government. On 30 Sept 2018 the region held its own parliamentary elections. The KDP won the most votes, securing 45 out of the 111 seats, the PUK came second with 21 seats, and the Gorran Movement was third with 12 seats, although the Gorran Movement refused to accept the results accusing the larger parties of election fraud. *Comment: The two major Kurdish parties, KDP and PUK, have ruled the Kurdish region under a power-sharing agreement since the late 1990s, however, their relationship has often been tense and acrimonious. The results suggest little will change in the KRG with the KDP dominating. However, the PUK will have greater influence in the Iraqi federal government following the election of their candidate, Barham Salih as President.*

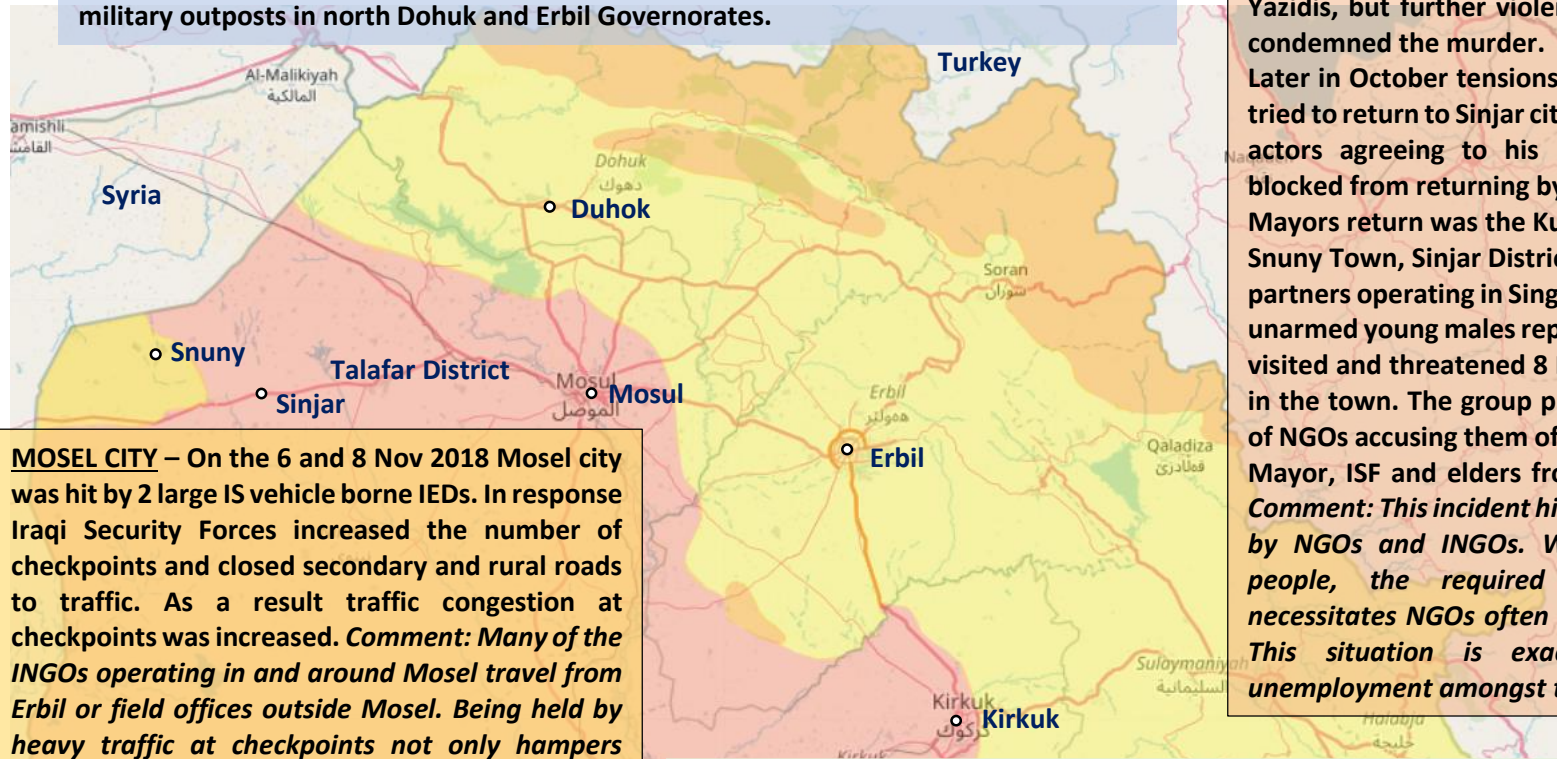
IRAQ'S NEW FEDERAL GOVERNMENT – Iraq's new parliament elected moderate Kurdish politician Barham Salih as the country's new president on 2 Oct 2018. Salih is a former Prime Minister (PM) of the KRG and a former deputy PM of the Iraqi federal government. His selection was delayed by disagreements of a candidate by the two leading Kurdish parties – KDP and PUK. Salih is a member of the smaller PUK. Salih subsequently named independent Shia candidate Adel Abdul Mahdi as PM. However, the months of deadlock in forming a government did not end there. Whilst most ministerial positions have been filled, rivalry between the two strongest political blocs is causing delays in the selection of Minister of Interior and Minister of Defence.



ERBIL CITY – High numbers of SGBV incidents involving humanitarian staff continue to occur in Erbil city. Eight incidents were recently reported that happened in Sept, Oct and early Nov. Whilst one involved a male member of staff who was inappropriately touched during a regular security search by the airport, most target women and take place in the Ankawa neighbourhood. Most also involve harassment and exposure, although in previously reported incidents staff have been physically touched and beaten. *Comment: Ankawa has a high number of INGO and UN offices, and several bars and hotels popular with internationals; this probably accounts for the high number of incidents in the neighbourhood.*

In October there were 2 serious shooting incidents. One involved the Deputy-Prime Minister, the other occurred in Ankawa. Both were personal disputes. *Comment: Shootings developing from personal disputes are inevitable when the proliferation of small arms is high, as it is in Erbil. In a city, there is a greater risk of innocent bystanders being injured and killed by stray shots and inaccurate fire.*

TURKISH MILITARY OPERATIONS – The Government of Turkey is increasing the attacks on PKK targets close to the Turkish border in the mountains of north Dohuk Governorate. In January 2018 11 Turkish operations were reported, in October this had increased to 35. These included airstrikes, artillery and ground operations. Turkey has more than 15 military outposts in north Dohuk and Erbil Governorates.



MOSEL CITY – On the 6 and 8 Nov 2018 Mosel city was hit by 2 large IS vehicle borne IEDs. In response Iraqi Security Forces increased the number of checkpoints and closed secondary and rural roads to traffic. As a result traffic congestion at checkpoints was increased. *Comment: Many of the INGOs operating in and around Mosel travel from Erbil or field offices outside Mosel. Being held by heavy traffic at checkpoints not only hampers programme delivery but also increases the risk of staff being caught in an attack on the checkpoints.*

TALAFAR DISTRICT – On 8 Oct an NGO staff member was killed whilst conducting Explosive Ordnance Disposal duties (EOD). The staff member was killed by an old IED from previous conflict in the area. This is the first reported death of NGO staff as a result of EOD duties for 3 years.

INSECURITY IN SINJAR – Local politics and ethnic differences create an unstable and volatile situation in Sinjar District. In October 2018 the Sheikh of a local tribe and municipal council member was assassinated. The tribe blamed the Yazidis, but further violence was avoided when the Yazidis condemned the murder.

Later in October tensions were high when the exiled Mayor tried to return to Sinjar city. Despite most of the local security actors agreeing to his return, the Mayor's convoy was blocked from returning by civilians. The main objector to the Mayors return was the Kurdish armed group PKK.

Snuny Town, Sinjar District is a hub for INGOs and their local partners operating in Singar. In mid-Nov 2018 a group of local unarmed young males reportedly affiliated with a Yazidi tribe visited and threatened 8 NGOs and disrupted NGO activities in the town. The group protested about the hiring practices of NGOs accusing them of excluding local residents. The local Mayor, ISF and elders from the Tribe calmed the tensions.

Comment: This incident highlights an ever present issue faced by NGOs and INGOs. Whilst most prioritize hiring local people, the required competencies and experience necessitates NGOs often hire non-locals who are relocated. This situation is exacerbated when there is high unemployment amongst the local youth as there is in Sinjar.

KIRKUK CITY – Kirkuk city continues to be a volatile city with frequent insurgency attacks, shootings, criminality, political tensions and military operations. Throughout Oct Iraqi security forces made several raids resulting in dozens of arrests of government officials and military personnel on corruption charges. The operations continued into November when criminals and owners of illegally held fire arms were targeted. Again dozens of arrests were made. Every month there are several IED attacks, in the first 2 weeks of Oct there were 9 IEDs alone. Not all of these attacks are IS, who still have a capacity to operate in the city. Many are attributed to the political instability in the city. Since the Iraqi government forcibly took control of the city from KRG forces in 2017, insecurity in the city has worsened. The main local political players in the city are unable to agree on how to proceed with its administration. Turkoman and Arab parties in the province have rejected full Kurdish control over the city, whilst tensions between the two major Kurdish parties, KDP and PUK, ensures they are unable to work together. Despite the KDP's dominance in the KRG, the PUK are strongest in Kirkuk and this is reinforced with a PUK governor of the city. *Comment: The position of the PUK governor is probably further strengthened by the selection of the PUK's candidate, Barham Salih, as Iraq's President.*

- Government of Iraq (Gol)
- Kurdish Regional Government (KRG)
- PPK active areas
- Yezidi YBS active areas