

Iraq edges towards civil war

By [Global Research](#)

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According to the Iraqi government statistics, targeted killings have doubled over the past 12 months

Violence has surged in Iraq in the recent weeks, ahead of the crucial Oct. 15 national vote on the new constitution, including car, roadside bombs, gun battles and kidnappings, and analysts say that the whole situation is beginning to look like, and feel like, civil war.

Last week, three car bombs hit the Iraqi town of Balad, killing 99 Iraqis and wounding 124. Another explosion hit Hilla on Friday, killing more than 12 and injuring 30.

The government's failure to control the situation and to put an end to the non-stop attacks that claimed the lives of hundreds of people in few weeks could pose a greater threat to the country's stability than the failure to reach a constitutional consensus.

"The government now is so inefficient at controlling the situation that the security situation has deteriorated, and so the political situation has deteriorated," said a senior government official.

"People don't want a constitution — they want security," said a former general in the Iraqi army and a Sunni, who lives in Ghaziliya, home to Shiites and Sunnis alike.

The U.S. pushed the Iraqi "government" to agree on the constitution which brought to the country more rifts and fueled the tension between Iraq's Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds. The new constitution is based on the November 2003 US-crafted illegitimate interim constitution, the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), produced from the notes book of Paul Bremer, then the U.S. Proconsul in Baghdad.

Tit-for-tat sectarian killings have escalated in Iraq's mixed neighborhoods, where Sunnis and Shiites used to live in peace.

According to the Iraqi government statistics, targeted killings have doubled over the past 12 months despite increasing the numbers of police on the streets and Iraqi National Guard patrols.

Officials said that nearly 700 of the 1,100 bodies brought to Baghdad's central morgue in July had fatal gunshot wounds. Doctors suggest that most victims were targets of assassination because they had multiple bullet wounds, mostly around the chest.

Minority families in neighborhoods such as Ghaziliya started moving to places where they are in the majority.

Once people start to leave, the tide of instability will be hard to control, said Ed Joseph, a fellow at the Wilson Institute who worked in Bosnia-Herzegovina during that Balkan country's war in the mid-1990s.

Ed believes the likelihood of civil war in Iraq increases if, after attacks targeting a certain community, other members of the minority population flee. He compared the situation in Iraq to Bosnia, when Muslims fled their villages after they were attacked by ethnic Serb soldiers.

"Once people leave en masse, they must find a place to go. They go toward places that are safe ... where 'their kind' is in charge. Then, in turn, hostility there turns toward the minorities in the areas they have fled to."

Better under Saddam The Saudi government also warned that the situation in Iraq is moving "toward disintegration" with a growing danger that the country will dissolve into a civil war.

During his recent visit to Washington, Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Faisal told said that his government warned Bush's admin. of the dangers of Iraq's unraveling as a result of tensions between the country's ethnic and religious groups, which he said were never as bad during the rule of the former President Saddam Hussein as they are today.

"The impression is gradually going toward disintegration. There seems to be no dynamic now that is pulling the country together. All the dynamics there are pushing the [Iraqi] people away from each other," Faisal said.

The Saudi FM, moreover, stressed that the current deteriorating security situation in Iraq threatens the stability of the entire Middle East nations.

"It will draw the countries of the region into conflict. That is the main worry of all the neighbors of Iraq," he said, adding that further disintegration among Iraq's ethnic groups would bring Iran more directly into support for Iraq's Shiite majority, while Turkey would "not allow" a Kurdish country to emerge on its border, fueling the tension and the rifts between the three ethnic groups, all of which would vie for control of the oil resources.

U.S. military leaders downplay threat However, U.S. military leaders in the Mideast are trying to undermine the threat of civil war in Iraq.

"There is always a possibility that things could deteriorate," Gen. John Abizaid, the top U.S. commander in the Middle East said in an interview at NBC's Meet the Press. He said that the "Sunni insurgency", was "certainly alive and well," but political progress would help defeat it.

"If a legitimate government emerges that is broadly seen as being representative of Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish interests, I think there is no reason to suppose that we can't bring force levels down in the spring," Abazaid said.

"The people of Iraq think of themselves as Iraqis, and people are not interested necessarily in seeing the fragmentation of the country. And I don't see that happening," Gen. George Casey, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, said in an interview on CNN's "Late Edition."

Abizaid downplayed the threat of sectarian division, saying that if Iraqi voters rejected the constitution, it would not "necessarily be an unusual or catastrophic event."

“As long as politics continues to move in the direction it appears to be moving ... the insurgency doesn’t have a chance,” he said. “If politics continues, it’s really a victory for all of us.”

In another interview on CBS’ “Face the Nation,” Abizaid claimed that Washington is doing all it can to persuade the Sunnis to take part in the country’s political future.

“We’ve spent too much time over the last couple of years talking about the Kurds and the Shiites and the Sunnis. We’ve got to start talking about Iraqis,” Abizaid said.

Despite the recent wave of violence that hit several towns and cities in Iraq, President George W. Bush maintains that the situation in Iraq is improving.

Several politicians have actually suggested that the U.S. is involved in the sectarian killings in Iraq; encouraging sectarian strife with the aim of weakening the Iraqi nation and destabilizing the country, which would justify extending its military presence there.

The U.S. occupation has brought more threats and insecurity to the Iraqi people.

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