

Iraq Protesters Attack US Embassy over Air Strikes

Several militia members injured by stun grenades and tear gas as thousands of Iraqis advance on building in Baghdad

By [Middle East Eye](#)

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Thousands of protesters attacked the US embassy in the Iraqi capital on Tuesday in anger at American air strikes in Iraq and Syria that killed more than two dozen Iran-backed militia fighters at the weekend.

The demonstrators marched through checkpoints that usually restrict access to Baghdad's high-security Green Zone, chanting "Death to America", burning US flags and holding posters calling for the embassy to be shut down.

The protesters and militia men stormed and burnt a security kiosk at the entrance to the embassy but did not breach the main compound as security forces and embassy guards fired tear gas and stun grenades, Reuters witnesses said.

Twelve militia men were wounded by tear gas and stun grenades, according to medical sources.

Blood could be seen on the face of one militia men and on the stomach of another as their colleagues carried them away from the scene, a witness said.

US President Donald Trump said that Iran was "orchestrating" the attack and would be held responsible for it.

"Iran killed an American contractor, wounding many. We strongly responded, and always will. Now Iran is orchestrating an attack on the U.S. Embassy in Iraq. They will be held fully responsible. In addition, we expect Iraq to use its forces to protect the Embassy, and so notified," he said in a tweet.

US forces carried out air strikes on Sunday against the Kataib Hezbollah (KH) militia in response to the killing of a US civilian contractor in a rocket attack on an Iraqi military base in Kirkuk on Friday.

Iraq's caretaker premier Adel Abdul Mahdi said that the protesters at the embassy should leave the compound "immediately".

"We recall that any aggression or harassment of foreign embassies will be firmly prohibited by the security forces," Abdul Mahdi's office said several hours after the attack began.

'No, no, Trump!'

The US ambassador and other staff have been evacuated from the embassy, two Iraqi foreign ministry officials told Reuters.

The ambassador and staff left out of security concerns, they said. One official said a few embassy protection staff remained.

However, the Reuters information was disputed by Alhurra, the US-based Arabic-language channel.

BREAKING:

The [@Reuters](#) claim that the American embassy was evacuated was false and embassy staff are still inside the building while the ambassador is currently out of [#Iraq](#), according to [@AlhurraIraq](#).

— H. Sumeri (@IraqiSecurity) [December 31, 2019](#)

The US State Department and White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment on whether the ambassador and other embassy staff had been evacuated from the embassy compound, Reuters said.

The US air strikes risk drawing Iraq further into a proxy conflict between the US and Iran at a time when it is being rocked by mass protests against the political system.

Some protesters threw stones at the gate of the embassy while others chanted, "No, no, America! ... No, no, Trump!" Iraqi special forces were deployed around the main gate to prevent them entering the embassy.

Qais al-Khazali, leader of the Iranian-backed Asaib Ahl al-Haq militia, and many other senior militia leaders were among the protesters.

KH flags were hung on the fence surrounding the building.

Iraqis are taking to the streets in their thousands almost daily to condemn, among other things, militias such as KH and their Iranian patrons that support Abdul Mahdi's government.

Abdul Mahdi condemned the strikes, which killed at least 25 fighters and wounded 55.

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