

<https://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/beyond/death-in-baghdad/>

Death in Baghdad

Bombings in Baghdad reduced, but never went away: 229 civilians were killed in explosions in the 3 years leading up to the Jan 21, 2021 attack.

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Iraqis inspect the site of an explosion in Baghdad's Sadr City district, Iraq, 07 June, 2018. At least 18 people were killed and over 100 wounded after two powerful blasts targeted a munitions store at a Shiite mosque. (*Ameer Al Mohammedaw/dpa Alamy*)

"My brother is married and has two children. He went out this morning to earn a living for his little ones and now he's nowhere to be found," Abbas Samy, 25, told AFP. Samy rushed to Sheikh Zayed hospital after the blast in an attempt to locate his brother -- to no avail. "How will his kids live?" he cried out. (AFP via MSN 21 Jan)

On the morning of January 21, 2021, two suicide bombers detonated their explosives in an open-air market where crowds, including labourers, gather, in Baghdad's Tayaran Square. The incident, reported by major western media, resulted in at least 32 civilian deaths and over 100 injuries.

Mazen al-Saadi, 34, said he was lucky to be alive. "He was just a few metres (yards) in front of me. After the blast, he just vanished and I wasn't able to find him -- until now," Saadi told AFP. After a few hours of searching, he had just located his friend's body at the Sheikh Zayed morgue. With a sense of bitter resignation, Saadi said he had anticipated a return to violence in his native Baghdad. "We were always thinking about the explosions coming back -- we thought they could return at any moment, especially as the elections were getting closer," he said.

In January of 2018, almost exactly three years ago, a suicide attack in Tayaran Square left 38 people dead. *'But since then [AFP continues], Baghdad's residents have largely grown accustomed to quiet, with attacks becoming rare'.*

Have attacks causing civilian deaths really become "rare" in Baghdad in the last three years? The first point to note is that the majority of attacks did not involve explosives: most of

those killed were shot dead by government forces and militia during protests, others were gunned down by unknown shooters, others yet were found bound and tortured to death – and still others that were killed in explosions.

In 2018, 2019 and 2020 Iraq Body Count recorded 1,188 civilians violently killed in the governorate of Baghdad, by any and all weapons. The reported deaths from explosions totalled 229, and were recorded as follows:

Civilian deaths from explosives in Baghdad, 2018-2020

2018: 181 deaths

Jan 3	1 killed by IED in Dora
Jan 4	1 killed by IED in Latifiya
Jan 6	4 killed by IEDs in Kamaliyah, Abu Ghraib, Dora, Abu Dsheer
Jan 7	1 killed by IED in Jisr Diyala
Jan 9	1 killed by IED in Taji
Jan 10	1 killed by IED in Madain
Jan 12	2 killed by IEDs in markets in Al-Wahda and Madain
Jan 13	2 killed by IEDs in Husseiniya and Yusufiya
Jan 13	7 killed by suicide bomber in Kadhimiya
Jan 14	1 killed by IED in Tarmiya
Jan 15	38 killed by suicide bombers
Jan 16	1 killed by IED in Tobchi
Jan 17	1 killed by IED in Madain
Jan 18	1 killed by IED in Hor Rajab
Jan 19	2 killed by AED and IED in Nahrawan and Taji
Jan 20	2 killed by IED in Madain and Al-Rashid
Jan 23	1 killed by IED in Yusufiya
Jan 24	1 killed by IED in Abu Ghraib
Jan 25	1 killed by IED in Fadhiliya
Jan 26	2 killed by IEDs in Tarmiya
Jan 28	1 killed by IED in market in Radwaniya
Jan 30	3 killed by IEDs in Ur, Rashidiya and Bayaa
Feb 1	4 killed by IEDs in Nahrawan, Diyala Bridge, Fadhiliya
Feb 5	2 killed by IED in a market in Tarmiya
Feb 7	1 killed by IED in Diyala Bridge
Feb 8	3 killed by IEDs in Bakriya, Nahrawan, Taji

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Feb 9	1 killed by IED in Abu Ghraib
Feb 10	1 killed by IED in Yusufiya
Feb 12	1 killed by IED in Sidiya
Feb 13	1 killed by IED in Radwaniya
Feb 14	1 killed by IED in Tarmiya
Feb 17	1 killed by IED in Al-Furat
Feb 19	1 killed by IED in Taji
Feb 23	2 killed by IEDs in Abu Ghraib and Madain
Feb 24	1 killed by IED in Diyala Bridge
Feb 25	1 killed by IED in market in Radwaniya
Feb 26	1 killed by IED in Tarmiya
Mar 1	2 killed by IEDs in Al-Maalif and Abu Ghraib
Mar 2	3 killed by IEDs in Abu Ghraib, Al-Amil, Nahrawan
Mar 4	3 killed by IED in Madain and Duanem
Mar 11	1 killed by IED in Yusufiya
Mar 12	1 killed by IED in Tarmiya
Mar 13	2 killed by IED in Taji
Mar 16	2 killed by IED in Shula and Madain
Mar 24	1 killed by IED in Tarmiya
May 5	1 killed by AED in Zaidan
May 6	1 killed by IED in Radwaniya
May 16	7 killed by suicide bomber in Tarmiya
May 21	1 killed by IED in Tarmiya
May 24	5 killed by suicide bomber in Shula
Jun 3	1 killed by IED in Husseinia
Jun 6	20 killed in explosions in mosque in Sadr City
Jul 4	1 killed by IED in Shula
Jul 6	1 killed by AED in Jokuk
Jul 10	1 killed by AED in Radwaniya
Jul 14	1 killed by IED in Taji
Jul 26	1 killed by AED in Mashtal
Aug 1	1 policeman killed by IED
Aug 2	1 policeman killed by AED in Saba al-Bour
Aug 14	3 (inc. 1 child) killed by IED in Sadr City

Civilian deaths from explosives in Baghdad, 2018-2020

Sep 25	2 killed by IED in Bayaa
Sep 30	1 killed by IED in Obaidi
Oct 1	2 killed by IEDs in Obaidi and Shaab
Oct 7	2 killed by IEDs in Jokuk and Abu Dsheer
Oct 11	2 killed by IED in Baladiyat
Oct 12	3 killed by IED in Baladiyat
Oct 20	1 killed by IED in Abu Ghraib
Nov 4	8 killed by IEDs in Kadhimiya, Habibiya, Sadr City, Shula
Nov 27	2 killed by IED in Shula.
2019: 38 deaths	
May 9	8 killed by suicide bomber in Jamila
May 11	1 child killed by IED in Diyala Bridge
Jun 21	10 killed by IED in Baladiyat
Jul 4	4 killed by IED in Tarmiya
Jul 15	2 killed by suicide bomber in al-Maalif
Nov 15	4 protesters killed by IED
Nov 16	1 killed by IED in Tahrir Square
Nov 18	1 man killed by rocket
Nov 21	1 killed by IED in New Baghdad
Nov 26	6 killed by IEDs in Shaab, Baladiyat, Bayaa
2020: 10 deaths	
Feb 27	2 killed by bomb in market in Mahmudiya
May 10	1 killed by IED in Abu Dsheer
May 19	1 killed by IED in Madain
Sep 28	5 (2 women and 3 children) killed by missile near airport
Nov 17	1 child killed in rocket attack

As the impact of the suicide bombings of January 21, 2021 was being assessed, major media outlets rushed to publish reports containing ill-judged statements, such as that the attack

*“... raises fear of return to violence in Iraqi capital”
([Guardian 21 Jan](#))*

or that

*“The last deadly suicide attack in the city was in
January 2018” ([BBC 21 Jan](#))*

Also misleading is the notion put forward by Iraqi authorities describing it as

“...a possible sign of the reactivation of Islamic State” (Reuters 21 Jan)

As though violence had been absent in the Iraqi capital; as though terrorism by ISIS or others had gone away for a while from the streets of Iraqi towns and cities...

Some versions referred, much more accurately, to the 21st January attack as disrupting “a period of relative calm”: the key word here being “relative” and only relative, of course, to Baghdad’s recent past. ([AFP 21 Jan](#))

That the western media only takes full notice of the spectacular and exceptional incidents of violence in Iraq may be giving the impression – between such events – that its capital has become a stable or even a peaceful city.

The figures suggest how far this remains from the truth.

No Western city experiencing 5 deadly bomb attacks in a single year (as in Baghdad in 2020), or 12 such attacks (in 2019), let alone more than 80 (in 2018) could have those periods described as “calm” or “quiet” – and that’s before we include all the attacks by means other than explosives. 1,188 violent deaths in Baghdad remains just as much an accumulation of tragedies even if most occurred in events too small to draw worldwide media attention.

Violent death in Baghdad has been an almost daily occurrence since 2003. The frequency may have varied over the years, but the real threat of violence that mars the daily existence of Iraqis in the capital is ever-present.

Who knows when the next bomb will explode, as labourers go out to seek work, as children walk to school, as families go to the market, as policemen patrol the streets? Who knows where the shooter lurks, or the abductors and executioners will strike next?

As Iraqis leave their homes or bid their loved ones goodbye, they do not know if that day they will become the next victims. For every Iraqi, in any town or city, there remains the genuine possibility of a bomb ticking, an explosion or crack of gunfire waiting just for them.