

# Iraq Blasts Kill At Least 52, Injure More Than 70

**BAGHDAD (AFP) – At least 52 people are killed and more than 70 others wounded in two car bomb blasts in Iraq’s eastern Diyala and northern Salahuddin provinces.**

The first bombing incident in Diyala’s Baladroz District left 35 killed and over 70 injured on Saturday.

On the same day, the second blast in the northern part of the city of Samarra in Salahuddin also claimed the lives of 17 people.

Tens were also injured in clashes which erupted after the second incident between the Takfiri ISIL terrorists and the Iraqi army.

The road connecting the Iraqi cap-

ital city of Baghdad and Samarra is currently closed.

On Friday, at least eight people were killed in a series of bombings and mortar attacks on areas in and around Baghdad.

ISIL started its campaign of terror in Iraq in early June 2014. The heavily-armed terrorists took control of the city of Mosul before sweeping through parts of the country’s Sunni Arab heartland.

Iraqi soldiers, police units, Kurdish forces, Shia volunteers and Sunni tribesmen are engaged in joint operations to drive back the terrorists from the areas they have under control.



*Iraqi policemen stand guard on a street in Jisr Diyala neighborhood on the southeastern edge of the capital, Baghdad, on February 25, 2015. (AFP photo)*

## Lebanon’s Army Chief Vows to Defeat Intruding Terrorists

**BEIRUT (Dispatches) – Lebanon’s army has pledged to counter Syria-based Takfiri terrorists threatening to infiltrate and destabilize the country as armed forces prepare for potential terrorist counterattacks in response to their expulsion from key positions.**

The Friday remarks by Lebanese army commander General Jean Kahwagi came a day after ISIL-linked terrorists were flushed out in a pre-emptive strike by the army troops from two strategic hilltop outposts in the countryside area of north-eastern town of Ras Baalbek, Lebanese news outlet Daily Star reported Saturday.

The army operations were aimed at purging the intruding armed elements holed up near the Syrian border.

“The army has no choice but to win over terrorism,” said Kahwagi while inspecting Lebanese military units stationed in Ras Baalbek, where he was briefed by officers on the field measures adopted following the swift op-



*Lebanon’s Defense Minister Samir Moqbel (R) and Army chief Gen. Jean Kahwagi (C) arrive in Ras Baalbek to inspect troops guarding against terrorist intrusion at Syria border.*

eration against the terrorists on Thursday.

Kahwagi was accompanied by Lebanon’s Defense Minister Samir Moqbel in his Friday tour of Ras Baalbek in what was viewed as morale-boosting effort for the army soldiers deployed around the mainly Christian town and other areas near the border with Syria.

“The qualitative military op-

eration, which was carried out yesterday [Thursday] and was crowned with great success, reflected the army’s firm decision to fight terrorism and ward off its danger from citizens,” Kahwagi said.

Meanwhile, a military official was also cited in the report as saying that the Lebanese army sporadically pounded terrorist hideouts on the northeastern

border with Syria on Friday using rockets and artillery fire a day after the troops killed at least three suspected ISIL terrorists in an operation in the Ras Baalbek countryside.

The army’s policy of pre-emptive shelling was enforced after eight soldiers, including an officer, were killed and 22 others were wounded in fierce clashes with ISIL Takfiri terrorists on the outer edge of Ras Baalbek in January.

Meanwhile, Lebanon’s Interior Minister Nouhad Machnouk was also cited in the report as saying that the security situation in the country was under control despite the growing threats posed by the ISIL and the al-Nusra Front Takfiri terrorists, which are still holding 25 Lebanese soldiers and policemen hostage on the outskirts of the northeastern town of Arsal.

Lebanon is suffering from the spillover of militancy in neighboring Syria where foreign-backed terrorists are fighting the government forces.

### It Takes...

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people through a border the whole world is asking Turkey to close. You have ambitious middle men who are profiting on the killing of Syrians.”

Turkey for years has asked for more international assistance in dealing with the mass displacement of Syrians on its soil -- they number more than 1,622,000, according to government and UN numbers. Extremists are often interspersed in refugee populations. The country blames a lack of intelligence-sharing between countries for why so many foreign militants and ISIL supporters slip through the cracks. After Hayat Boumeddiene, the wife of one of the Paris gunmen in last month’s attacks, escaped easily from Turkey into Syria, Turkey ardently defended itself from criticism.

Takfiri terrorists take advantage of the porous border and easily bribed guards. Anas, 20, says he crosses to and from Syria through Turkey’s official border crossings with ease, despite not having a passport.

Walking from Turkey’s Bab al-Salam border gate in the border town of Kilis, his shoulder-length hair and thick, long beard -- a style often worn by Takfiris -- stands out in the crowd of refugees. The young man claims to have fought with the Free Syrian Army, then the ISIL, and now fights “freelance” for groups like Jabhat al-Nusra, also known as Al-Qaeda in Syria.

“I bribe the Turkish border guards,” he said nonchalantly, without elaborating.

Rami Zaid, a 23-year-old activist in Aleppo, says he crosses once or twice a month, usually east of the Bab al-Salam border gate because, as he says, there isn’t much security. He doesn’t have a passport either, and unlike Anas, he says, he can’t get through official border without one -- so he pays Turkish and Syrian smugglers \$25-50 every trip to help him across.

For Abu Hawrain, a 24-year-old Syrian lamb trader turned smuggler, paying off Turkish border guards at the Bab al-Salam crossing is part of the daily routine. The Idlib native says he smuggles roughly 100 people a month to territory on the other side controlled by Free Syrian Army-affiliated militants and more hardline groups.

“They don’t care about the law,” he said of the guards at the border. “They let anyone cross if they have money.”

But the official Turkish forces at the gate aren’t really the ones controlling the border, Abu Hawrain said. A group of four to five rich and widely feared Turkish “gang” leaders run things in Kilis, according to the young smuggler who says he sees them every day.

“The police are afraid of the powerful men,” he continued. “The smugglers pay them directly.”

Hawrain says he makes 75 Turkish lira, or \$30, per person he smuggles, but he has to shell out the equivalent of \$20 to pay off the Turkish gangsters and border guards. Most of what he makes, he doesn’t get to keep.

When asked what would happen if he kept all of his earnings, Hawrain shook his head: “They’re mafia -- they can do anything.”

### British...

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by Unite, which itself handled the final stages of the negotiations with BA in late 2011. The final sum paid to the union, according to legal sources inside Unite, was about £1m.

Taylor subsequently took the unusual step of suing his former client over unpaid fees. In documents lodged at the High Court’s Queen’s Bench Division and acquired by The Independent, Taylor claimed he was owed £180,927 by Unite on “behalf of certain of its members”. Invoices detailed in the claim are understood to relate to cabin staff whose communications were accessed in the first half of 2011.

Had Taylor Hampton’s dispute with Unite gone to court, it would have led to the full story being made public of BA investigators accessing emails and phone messages. Given that this was when the News International phone-hacking scandal was at its height, it is likely that BA would have felt especially anxious to avoid headlines linking it to communications interceptions of any kind -- even though there was no suggestion of criminality on BA’s part.

Taylor Hampton and Unite were contacted by The Independent. The union would say only that it had dealt with Taylor Hampton over a “variety of matters”, and that the subsequent dispute over “justifiable fees” had been resolved. Unofficially, union sources said they were bound by a confidentiality agreement.

Taylor said he had taken the action against Unite with “a great deal of regret” but was prevented by a similar confidentiality agreement from discussing further details.

The Independent gave BA the full details of Unite’s legal claim, how investigators had accessed emails and phones, the £1m settlement, descriptions of its investigations unit at Heathrow -- set up ostensibly to improve passenger safety and security -- and Taylor’s intended legal action.

In January 2011 BA cabin crew voted in favor of fresh strikes that were part of an ongoing dispute that went back to 2009. BA had gone to the courts to prevent a strike, and was successful in halting a planned strike because of flawed ballot procedures.

But in March 2010, after talks again collapsed, a three-day walkout took place amid threats of a further 20-day strike. BA responded by telling cabin staff that if they took part in the action they would lose valued travel perks. Elements of that disagreement lasted throughout 2010 and into 2011.

## US Drone Strike Claims 4 Lives in Yemen



*Yemeni men walk past a mural depicting a US drone and a dove in a yin-yang symbol in the capital, Sana’a.*

**SANAA (Press TV) – A killer US drone strike in southern Yemen has left four suspected al-Qaeda militants dead.**

The attack targeted militants, who were traveling in two vehicles in the Bihan region of Yemen’s southern province of Shabwa on Saturday, a local security official said.

Several other suspected militants were wounded in Saturday’s drone strike, the official noted.

The drone attack comes amid political tensions in Yemen.

Washington says political void in Yemen will not affect its so-called anti-terrorism campaign in the Arab country.

The United States acknowledges using drones as part of its targeted killing campaign in Muslim countries to eliminate what it regards as militants. However, it does not comment publicly on individual cases of the aerial bombing campaign.

The US administration claims that the drones target al-Qaeda militants, but local sources say civilians have been the main victims of the airstrikes.

The US drone strikes in Yemen have led to the deaths of many civilians over the past few years in a blatant violation of international law, according to Human Rights Watch.

## US Drone Strike Kills 4 in Eastern Afghanistan

**KABUL (Press TV) – At least four people have been killed in the latest US drone strike in Afghanistan’s eastern province of Nangarhar.** Afghan officials said the attack targeted a convoy of militants in the Nazyan district on Saturday, also injuring one person and causing multiple casualties.

Meanwhile, local officials said militants launched an attack on security posts overnight, claiming that a local Taliban commander has been killed in a counter-attack by police forces.

The United States conducts drone strikes in Afghanistan and several other Muslim countries despite international criticism.

While Washington claims the targets of the drone attacks are al-Qaeda militants, local officials and witnesses have on many occasions maintained that civilians have been the victims of the attacks over the past few years.