

# IRAQ

## SOCIAL PROTEST

STARTING DATE: 1 OCTOBER 2019

**TRIGGER** • Popular anger over economic hardship and rampant corruption

**GOALS**

- Renewal of the country's entire political class.
- Economic reforms.
- More efficient public services.
- Less influence of foreign countries such as US and Iran in Iraq's domestic affairs.

### STATE OF PLAY

- Largest protests since the fall of former president Saddam Hussein in 2003.
- Officials have responded with violence (use of live ammunition against protesters by security forces) and restrictions (curfews, denied access to the internet).
- Despite the violent repression, protests and sit-ins sporadically continue in the capital Baghdad, mainly in and around Tahrir Square and neighbouring bridges, as well as the Shiite-majority southern cities of Karbala, Nasiriya, Basra, Hillah and Kut, among others.
- The Iraqi leadership, backed by Iran and oil wealth, seems confident in its ability to contain the protests and gives no evidence of wanting to give in despite pressure by the United Nations and the United States.
- Suspected involvement of Iranian militias in the deadly violence causes resentment among protesters. On 4 November firebombs were thrown at the Iranian Consulate and headquarters of parties and militias linked to Tehran in Baghdad.

### IMPACTS: SIGNIFICANT



- 319 people killed by security forces.
- 15,000 injured.



- A general strike on 4th November brought economic activity to a standstill.
- Oil industry badly hit by road blockades hampering transportation. According to the Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi, losses amount to billions of dollars.



- Roads, including those leading to country's ports, are blocked by barricades and burned tyres during protests.



### POTENTIAL TRIGGERS FOR ESCALATION

- Broader scale of protests.
- Systematic repression of protests by security forces who resort to violence.
- Sustained denial of internet access.
- Disruption to the country's main airports and roads.
- Violence targeting foreigners and foreign interest.
- State of emergency declared.



### POTENTIAL TRIGGERS FOR DE-ESCALATION

- Effective stepping down of incumbent Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi.
- The implementation of electoral reforms and the organization of free and fair elections.
- Ban on the use of lethal means by security forces.
- Investigation into the deaths and abductions of activists.
- Reforms aimed at curbing corruption and holding officials involved accountable.