

At least 110 people killed in Iraq after two days of violence
By Al Arabiya with Agencies
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At least 110 people have been killed in Iraq since clashes broke out yesterday between security force and gunmen, officials said on Wednesday.

Tensions are rising since dozens of people were killed and injured when Iraqi security forces stormed a Sunni Muslim anti-government protest camp in Hawija, near Kirkuk, on Tuesday. The raid on the protest was followed by an attack on Iraqi army checkpoints.

Iraqi officials are meeting in Anbar, in the western region of Iraq, to discuss the crisis in Kirkuk, Al Arabiya's correspondent reported on Wednesday.

Following the raid on the camp, coordination committees in Anbar called on tribesmen in the province to take up arms and remain on high alert.

Iraqi Premier Nuri al-Maliki has ordered the establishment of a fact-finding mission to investigate the details of the Hawija incident.

Meanwhile, Iraqi Parliament Speaker Osama al-Nujaifi labeled the incident in Hawija as a "catastrophe," adding that the army's action against the protesters was a "flagrant violation of the constitution."

Nujaifi also questioned who gave the order for Iraqi forces to target protesters.

The truth remains a mystery

Until the fact-finding mission completes its task, the truth of what happened in Hawija will remain unclear, although dozens were killed and injured, Al-Arabiya's correspondent reported.

Statements on what happened during the raid on Hawija are contradictory.

The defense ministry had said that its forces raided the anti-government protest camp to look for outlaws after two military checkpoints were attacked in the area of al-Rashad in the province.

According to the defense ministry's statement, clashes occurred with armed men leading to fatalities and injuries on both sides. The statement added that dozens of armed men were arrested and weapons were seized.

Protesters however denied these accusations and said the army attacked them and opened fire with no provocation on their part.

Kirkuk's provincial council condemned the alleged excessive violence practiced by security forces against protesters.

The council held parties that participated in negotiations and in carrying out the raid on the camp responsible because they did not coordinate together to reach a peaceful solution. The council also called on humanitarian organizations to intervene and aid the injured people.



Dozens of people were killed and injured when Iraqi security forces stormed a Sunni Muslim anti-government protest camp in Hawija, near Kirkuk, on Tuesday. (Reuters)

A wave of anger

The revenge attacks continued on Wednesday, leaving nine security forces members and three gunmen dead.

In the deadliest fighting, gunmen killed five soldiers and wounded five more in the Suleiman Bek, area north of Baghdad, a high-ranking army officer and an administrative official said.

Gunmen also attacked a Sahwa anti-Qaeda militia checkpoint in Kholes, northeast of Baghdad, killing four of the militiamen and wounding a fifth, a police lieutenant colonel and a doctor said.

And gunmen wounded a policeman in the northern city of Mosul, while a soldier was wounded in another shooting to its south, police and a doctor said.

Three of the gunmen were killed in the Mosul attack.

Three people were also killed in apparently-unrelated violence.

A car bomb against a police patrol killed two police and a civilian and wounded at least seven other people in Tarmiyah, north of Baghdad, an interior ministry official and a medical source said.

And in Fallujah, west of Baghdad, a mortar attack targeting the home of a provincial council member wounded a man and two children, although the politician was unharmed, a police captain and a doctor said.

Protesters have taken to the streets in Sunni-majority areas of Iraq for more than four months, calling for the resignation of Maliki and decrying the alleged targeting of their minority community by the Shiite-led authorities.

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