



Field Report, 22 June 2022

1. Thi-Qar – Hemorrhagic Fever Causing Panic1
2. Basra – Political Impasse Impacting Daily Lives2
3. Kurdistan Region – Protests Over Delayed Salaries3
4. Wasit – Medical Centers Bring Care Closer to Home5
5. Najaf – High Prices ... Yet Another Endurance Test.....7
6. Tikrit – Deaf and Mute Institute Celebrates Results8



These Field Reports are prepared by the field staff of UNAMI's Development Support Office (DSO), who are based in Iraq's governorates, where they coordinate with local government officials, NGOs, community groups, and other development actors. They also monitor socio-economic and development trends to improve the UN's understanding of events in Iraq.

1. Thi-Qar – Hemorrhagic Fever Causing Panic



Iraqis have terrible memories of viral hemorrhagic fevers (VHFs) when they hit the country in 1979¹. Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever² (CCHF) has struck again in southern parts of Iraq, mainly in Thi-Qar. The number of cases so far in 2022 has reached 162, including 27 deaths, while in 2021 only 16 cases were recorded, including seven deaths.

CCHF are transmitted by mosquito or tick bites that feed on infected animals. The virus can also be spread from person to person by contact with infected body fluids, such as blood, saliva or semen.

Dr. Imad Diab, the Director of Thi-Qar Veterinary Hospital, explained that the increase of ticks and interactions with the virus is partially attributed to the impact of climate change, mainly desertification, drought, and the scarcity of rain. Random slaughtering of cattle in the streets and public areas has also increased transmission as butchers come into contact with infected animals.

Dr. Diab highlighted that the usual annual plan for fighting the virus is spraying barns and livestock selling venues with insecticides before the emergence of insects in autumn and spring. At the beginning and end of summer, barns and cattle selling areas are sprayed with insecticides, and cattle are immersed in pools of water mixed with insecticide to ensure that they are completely sterilized.

Faisal Al-Sharifi, the Assistant Governor of Thi-Qar, clarified that purchasing, importing, and providing insecticide falls under the authority and responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). The local government is not authorized to do so.



CCHF is transmitted by Ticks@ local media

There are around 620,000 registered livestock, including cows, buffalo, sheep, and goats, but the number of veterinarians does not exceed 100. This number is not sufficient to respond to the increasing infections. The governorate needs 900 veterinarians to cover the whole area and control the disease.

The local government has taken ineffective steps to contain the CCHF, such as preventing cattle to get in or out of infected areas before ensuring their safety, and collaboration between the municipality and veterinary department to control random slaughtering and stray dogs.

Dr. Hayder Ali, an epidemiologist, stated that this number of CCHF cases is unprecedented in Iraq. The virus is also transmitted via animals' fluids like milk. To prevent infection when having interactions with livestock, masks and glasses should be worn, and the barns should not be located near homes in rural areas.

¹ VHFs are a group of diseases caused by several distinct families of viruses, which affect multiple organ systems in the body and reduce their ability to function on their own. Symptoms of VHFs vary by disease but often include fever and hemorrhage, or bleeding. Most viral hemorrhagic fevers have no known cure or vaccine (The Health Site.com).

²CCHF is the most widespread tick-borne viral disease affecting humans. The causative agent, CCHF virus (a Nairovirus of the Bunyaviridae family) is transmitted mainly by ticks (*Hyalomma*) and livestock animals. Human-to-human transmission can occur, usually in the health care setting, resulting from close contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected persons. The disease begins with a sudden onset of influenza-like symptoms which may progress to severe bleeding and can be fatal (current case fatality rate is 10-40%) if not treated (WHO website)



On 16 May 2022, the Iraqi Ministry of Health, along with the WHO Country Representative, met the local government and discussed how to control the virus. WHO is communicating with governmental institutions at the local and national levels to discuss how they can support mitigating the effects of this disease. WHO also works to support the medical and health staff on infection prevention control and community awareness campaigns.

FAO’s South focal point shared that FAO does not have any direct interventions relevant to the CCHF outbreak in Thi-Qar. However, FAO contributed to the organization of two workshops on CCHF in May 2022 in Baghdad.

The main recommendations of those workshops were to support the veterinary staff currently working with new ones, forming a crisis cell from all ministries to control the disease, and conducting awareness campaigns for breeders, butchers, and relevant authorities.



Government measures to mitigate the spread of CCHF@ local media

Although key government officials have confirmed that there is no real concern about CCHF so far, the local media continues to warn of the effects of this disease due to a large number of daily infections and deaths. Moreover, many cases have not yet been discovered or have not been accurately diagnosed. Due to the people's mistrust of the government's preventive measures and the absence of its strategies and solutions to mitigate the effects of this disease, the citizens' panic is increasing.

2. Basra — Political Impasse Impacting Daily Lives



Eight months have passed since the national election was held in Iraq. The failure to form a government is impacting the economy, livelihoods, public service delivery, and Iraqi citizens’ daily lives.

Currently, the ongoing development projects implemented by local government, line ministries, and the private sector are stalled or slowing down around the country.

The 2022 federal budget approval is still pending in parliament and awaiting the formation of a new government. The caretaker government’s emergency support law, if it survives legal challenges, would only provide strategic food, and pay some debts to curb public outrage. However, it would not replace the public budget.

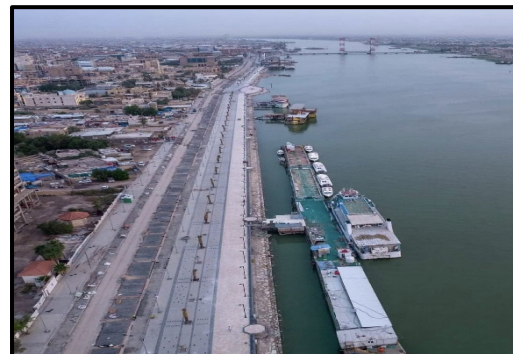
Ordinary citizens are suffering from the fallout of the political standstill. Dr. Hussein Ali, an economic expert at Basra University, told DSO that due to the delay in federal budget approval, both businesses and the local market are going through a recession.

At the employment level, pessimism overshadows the scene. Sami and Adel, two young daily wage workers at Basra municipality said, “We demonstrated for employment and better living conditions last year and were promised to be employed with permanent contracts once the 2022 budget is released. We have to wait for the new government as the current caretaker government fell short of



meeting our demands.” They added, “If the situation continues like this, the damage will be tremendous.”

Basra is less affected by the budgetary situation compared to other governorates. Basra’s government is functioning on 50% of locally generated revenue from borders and ports. In addition, Basra has 70% of accumulated petrodollar dues.³ The local revenues finance some stalled projects, such as the Basra corniche, and also sustain some basic services.



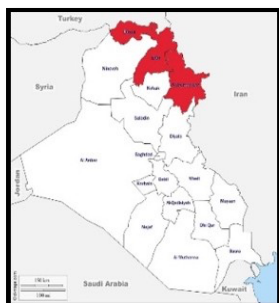
Basra corniche is one of the 2021 projects © local media

Nevertheless, the mega projects, like the Basra water desalination plant, Faw giant port, and other industrial, construction, housing, and agricultural projects were hindered by the delay in passing the federal budget.

In the water and agricultural sectors, high soil salinity, water scarcity, and climate change hamper agricultural activities and livelihoods in Basra. Smallholder farmers have been impatiently waiting for government subsidies and other forms of support to overcome these challenges.

Government loan schemes are also postponed until the federal budget gets approved. The governorate has not received the budget, so the current expenditures only cover the operational part of the budget such as salaries. Similarly, all new projects, including electricity supply, roads, and health care for this year were put on hold, and spending will be only for salaries and some ongoing projects.

3. Kurdistan Region – Protests Over Delayed Salaries



For the past six months, Kurds in the governorate of Sulaymaniyah took to the streets of various cities to demand payments of their salaries and other things. Most of the protestors were garbage collectors, university teachers, and students. Protesting is a growing pattern in Sulaymaniyah, and the frequency of protestors on the streets has tripled recently.

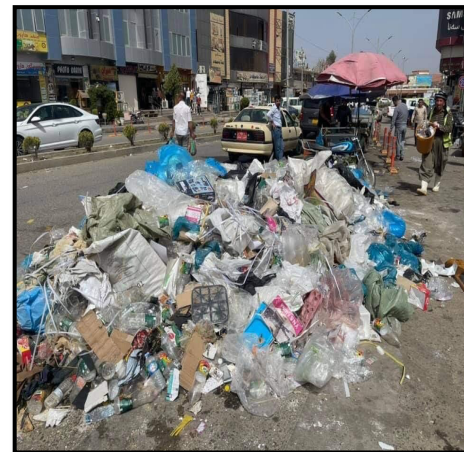
Most of these protestors are driven by anger over the government’s failure to improve service delivery, especially the provision of electricity, water, and dissatisfaction with corruption, the austerity measures imposed on public sector salaries, and other related governance issues. Although localized and sometimes uncoordinated, these protests have the potential to turn into a larger political following that could challenge the established order if issues highlighted during these protests are not addressed.

³ The total petrodollar allocation for the year 2022 is one trillion IQD (1 billion USD), Basra owns 70% of the mentioned amount.



The delayed payments have angered Mr. Shorsh Ahmed, the Chief Executive of Sulaymaniyah’s largest garbage collection company, SHKAR. He informed DSO that his laborers protesting salary delays are not ready to leave the streets until their six months of back payments are received. He admitted that his company has no control over the industrial actions of its staff.

The garbage collectors on various occasions have brought the cities to their knees. Their actions in April transformed the streets of Sulaymaniyah into a sea of garbage. Stinking heaps of trash accumulated on the streets of Chamachamal city for four days, a nightmare situation that posed a real health concern.



Uncollected garbage in the streets of Sulaymaniyah © 2022 file photo SHKAR

Shorsh went on to say that the company was in unfamiliar territory. Non-payment of wages for their staff is very new. He added that the current situation began in October 2021 due to politics and lack of liquidity at the bank.

SHKAR employs over 1,800 workers (some of them IDPs) and is one of the biggest employers in the region. Currently, the company is struggling with 28 months in back payment of staff to the tune of 970 million IQD (631,924 USD) per month (including operating costs) that needs to be recovered.

Normal cleaners earn around 300-350 thousand Iraqi dinars (202-236 USD) per month. In recent payments, staff were paid 60 percent of that amount due to the government-imposed austerity.

In April 2022, waving placards and dressed in their cleaning uniforms, hundreds of SHKAR garbage collectors began canvassing the streets of Sulaymaniyah, Halabja, Chamchamal, and Dokan to highlight their grievances with the government. The local councils, who outsource garbage collection, had little power to intervene. According to SHKAR, the government bank account against which the paychecks are drawn has no funds.



Street cleaners protesting of unpaid wages on the streets of Sulaymaniyah city © 2022 file photo

The protests come against the backdrop of deeper political discontent in a post-election period in Iraq, and when the relationship of the two dominant parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) are at their lowest. The PUK blames the KDP, which is governing in Erbil, for the uneven distribution of revenues, while the KDP blames the PUK for failing to return local non-oil revenues from the two provinces it controls to the central treasury.

Urban Sulaymaniyah generates a substantial amount of waste per day, and SHKAR collects almost 1,200 tons of it inside the city in addition to 700 tons outside of it. Everything the company collects ends up in a landfill, one kilometer southeast of the city of Sulaymaniyah. There, waste is dumped into piles without treatment or recycling.



According to the Shorsh, the situation could have been different if the municipality paid the money it owes them. The company’s \$100m investment in a garbage recycling plant is stalled because the company’s resources are tied up.

The plan was to build a plant that can reduce, reuse, recover, and recycle waste. This would have reduced the amount of garbage dumped in landfills by half and cut down the pollution of air, soil, and underground water. The proposed investment with a German firm to construct the recycling plant is in danger of collapsing with additional penalties due unless money is raised.



Streets of Sulaymaniyah city full of uncollected refuse © 2022 file photo SHKAR Cleaning

Hardening is evident on the faces of SHKAR’s leadership. If the government does not pay the pending dues, they vow to take legal action against them. The local government raised an amount to help the company pay a few months’ salaries, but that was all that the local council could do.

4. Wasit – Medical Centers Bring Care Closer to Home



“Well, we finally did it!” said Kadhum Kareem Elaiwi, the Director of Al-Hai District, adding, “With the growth of people in Al-Hai sub-districts, it only makes sense that essential care centers and specialists health care providers get brought to the district region to where the patients are.”

"It's an exhausting experience, I must get dialysis twice every week, while the nearest dialysis center is in Kut City," said Haj Hussain, a patient from Al-Hai District. "It takes all day to do one dialysis between traveling and the waiting in the queue while the dialysis itself takes three hours."

He added that having a new dialysis center in Al-Hai city with all these new devices is going to make treatment much easier for every patient.

The people of Al-Hai District suffered from the limited numbers of specialist physicians and care centers for important specialties, while the need became more intense with the growing numbers of patients in need of medical care in specialized fields such as renal dialysis and thoracic and respiratory problems.



Haj Hussain, a patient, appreciates the opening of Al-Hai dialysis center © Wasit Health Directorate



Patients of all ages used to get specialized medical care from other cities, which puts an extra burden on them for travel expenses and stress all day long outside their district for just a regular visit to see a doctor, especially dialysis patients, who need to go more than once per week.

On May 9, the Wasit local government opened two medical centers in Al-Hai District, the Al-Hai Dialysis Center, located downtown, and Al-Askary Thoracic and Respiratory Diseases Care Center, located in Al-Hai's Al-Askary neighborhood.

Besides saving time and cost for many patients, these new centers will allow earlier diagnose of illnesses and quickly start interventions.

The Al-Hai Dialysis Center includes 10 advanced dialysis machines, supported by other life-saving medical equipment, and supplies for patients in need of renal dialysis. Although the center currently has only 10 dialysis machines, the Wasit Health Directorate plans to expand the capacity of the center by adding more in the future.

The Thoracic and Respiratory Diseases Care Center will provide specialized medical care and consultancy to the patients for diseases such as tuberculosis, asthma, and cardiovascular function.

“Inconvenient financial and health burdens on the patients, not to mention delayed or canceled appointments for different reasons, having access to the specialists' doctors will ease people's burdens and make us closer to our goals,” said Dr. Jabbar Al-Yasiri, the Director-General of the Wasit Health Directorate.

According to the Wasit Health Directorate, over 100,000 people are estimated to benefit from the specialized medical care center by minimizing the number of patients seeking medical care outside the district.

The Directorate assigned 14 specialist doctors to rotate on a schedule in the new medical center. “Often patients with chronic illnesses have to schedule follow-up visits on a regular basis with specialist physicians,” says Dr. Al-Yasiri.

Meanwhile, a foundation stone for building another health care center has been laid in the Saeed Bin Jubeir region of Al-Hai city to replace a small old one. The new health center, when completed, will serve a population of 12,000 living in those neighborhoods.



Patients at the newly opened Al-Hai Dialysis Center© Wasit Health



A nurse takes patient's vital data in the Thoracic and Diseases Care Center© Wasit Health Directorate



Technicians at the X-Ray section in the Thoracic and Diseases Care Center© Wasit Health Directorate



5. Najaf – High Prices ... Yet Another Endurance Test



Rising prices in Iraq have forced many poor families to buy second-hand clothing, popularly known as "Bala," which is due to declining purchasing power caused by the repercussions of the pandemic and devaluation of the local currency against the dollar.

Citizens complain about the unaffordable prices of imported clothing and the difficulty of meeting their children's needs for new clothes to prepare for Eid al-Fitr.

Naji Hussein, a father of four, said he had difficulty securing his children's clothing needs, noting that he works as a government employee with a limited monthly salary, forcing him to cut costs because of unreasonable prices.

The owner of a clothing store, from his standpoint, says that it is difficult to see parents choosing between buying food and new clothes. He explains that a significant percentage of the clothing market in Iraq is imported from Turkey, Syria, and China. While prices vary according to quality and origin, the market for used clothing is increasingly popular because it is not subject to customs duties.

The reduction in spending is also affecting other consumer goods. Ali, 54 years, owner of a pastry and bakery products shop, attributes the price increases to higher costs for fuel, oil, flour, and other production components. This has resulted in low demand for cakes and pastries this year.

Bakers' demands for government support through subsidized prices of production materials and fuel fall on deaf ears, he says. The prices of some foodstuffs, especially wheat-derived goods, such as pastries, in addition to cooking oil, have increased by 20%.



Used clothes market in Najaf city courtesy Najaf news

Drought and water shortages are affecting economic activity in Iraq, especially grain production. Crops in irrigated areas are down by 50 percent compared to last year due to shortages in surface water. As a result, wheat production is expected to be 3.5 million metric tons, much less than in previous seasons (4.6 million metric tons in 2020⁴), which will drive up imports. Sharp increases in the price of food items and agricultural inputs in local and international markets, in addition to the devaluation of the Iraqi Dinar and the lifting of agricultural subsidies, add to production constraints.

Local economic experts predict that the decline in purchasing power in Iraqi markets during and after Eid al-Fitr will continue until the national budget law is enacted. The continuous decline in purchasing power will drive more Iraqi families below the poverty line. The poverty rate in Iraq has reached 24.8%, according to the Ministry of Planning, and the unemployment rate has reached 14%.

DSO Najaf met with the Najaf Deputy Planning Manager, Jawad Ibrahim, to discuss the initiatives by the local government to create job opportunities for unemployed youth in impoverished areas

⁴ <https://www.indexmundi.com/agriculture/?country=iq&commodity=wheat&graph=production>.

located on the outskirts of Najaf and Kufa. The deputy explained that many new projects are targeting deprived areas to offer job opportunities (for example including a road repair project, as it creates more jobs and improves access to services) and improve access to municipal services.

DSO will coordinate with an IOM representative in mid-June to include areas where IDPs are residing, as Najaf governorate hosts 8,334 IDPs from Ninewa governorate displaced after 2014, and they are in the process of reintegration, lacking stable income sources and good housing conditions.

6. Tikrit – Deaf and Mute Institute Celebrates Results



The Al-Amal Institute for deaf-mute and disabilities in Saladin distributed the final results for this year. The institute, operated by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA), opened in December 2021 in Tikrit city, the capital of Saladin province, with another branch in Balad.

Emad, a six-year-old boy, is one of Al-Amal’s pupils. His family moved him from one of Tikrit’s private deaf and mute institutes because he was scolded and beaten by other boys there last year. When Emad arrived at the Al Amal Institute, the staff gave him preferred treatment until and after he became familiar with his new classmates. Emad is now one of the most outstanding students.

The Tikrit institute has only 14 male students from the local population with hearing and speaking disabilities. Some challenges in welcoming more pupils are the lack of transportation, shortage of stationery, furniture, and modern educational methodologies and teaching equipment.

The cost of joining a governmental institute is reasonable compared with a private institute. However, rich people in Tikrit are inclined to send their sons to the private ones where they can benefit from advanced teaching methodologies.

Unfortunately, many families with mute daughters are unwilling or unable to pay the transport and stationery expenses for their girls as they do for their boys.

The Ministry of Education provided a special simplified international education program for deaf and mute students with reading, writing, and drawing skills. The institute hosts students from ages five to nine regardless of their talent.

Overall families whose sons are studying at this institute are satisfied because their sons developed their skills and are treated politely and professionally by the teaching staff.



Emad among his new colleagues. © Al Amal institute



Al Amal institute celebrates the final results © Al Amal institute



**Iraq Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) &
UNAMI Development Support Office (DSO)**



UNAMI-DSO contacted a UNICEF and UNDP field officer in Saladin, who confirmed that they do not currently support such programs with these institutions, and only emergency programs have been implemented with schools for returning displaced families.