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## Backgrounder: Literature Review of Local, Regional or Sub-State Defense Forces in Iraq

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Regional or community forces, militias, and other forms of local security actors have long existed in Iraq, supported either by local political actors or parties, regional actors, or non-state groups. However, in the last two years, these local and hybrid security forces (LHSFs) have proliferated. Peshmerga forces and a range of Shi'a and tribal militia forces, or local defense forces could be quickly mobilized to counter the threat posed by ISIL and fill gaps in the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). What has been the impact of these groups for community and political dynamics, prospects for stabilization in liberated areas, and other rule of law, governance, and rights concerns? What will be the future position of these groups after the immediate crisis is resolved, and how will the greater reliance on these quasi- or non-state actors impact the long-term prospects for the Iraqi state?

This background note briefly summarizes some of the existing literature surveyed about the impact of LHSFs for four key subject areas:

1. Security effectiveness;
2. Long-term impact and concerns for state-building;
3. Human rights and protection concerns;
4. Community dynamics, rule of law and local governance.

There is a summary of key facts and background about each of the main LHSFs considered in this study in the annex to this paper. Findings from the field research that followed this literature review, are available at [www.gppi.net/Post-ISIL-Iraq](http://www.gppi.net/Post-ISIL-Iraq).

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\* This is a working draft, which will be updated over the course of the project (until May 2019). This draft can be cited as a working draft.

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## **Background**

The aim of this project is to explore Local or Hybrid Security Forces (LHSF) in Iraq and Afghanistan from a comprehensive security perspective, with a particular emphasis on how these forces are affected by foreign support or assistance, and transnational or regional security threats. Research is led by the Institute for Regional and International Studies (IRIS) at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (AUIS) in Iraq, and the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) in Afghanistan, in cooperation with the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) in both countries. This research is supported by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research.

This project approaches the impact of militias, local or regional defense forces or hybrid, quasi-state forces from a comprehensive security perspective, considering not only whether these groups have contributed to security and stabilization goals, but also how they have affected community dynamics and empowerment, the protection of civilians and human rights, and other political, rule of law and governance dynamics. The outputs will be a series of research papers, some taking a comparative approach, but others focused exclusively on national or local dynamics within Iraq or Afghanistan. Given the focus on regional security threats or dynamics, the research may also consider issues regarding LHSFs in Syria, but only to the extent that they overlap with the anti-ISIL campaign or forces examined in Iraq.

This project aims to generate new evidence- and field-based insights that complement and build from existing research and analysis. As such, an important first step in the research process was to survey existing academic, policy and practitioner literature to identify open research questions or gaps in existing literature. This was complemented by preliminary stakeholder interviews and consultations with those with knowledge of current trends and needs observed in Iraq, or expertise in the particular subject matter areas.

This literature review only focuses on existing public sources, not the independent research or stakeholder research conducted as part of this project, nor non-public reports shared with researchers.

## **Definitions**

This project is interested in pro-government, non-state or sub-state forces, including militias, local or community defense forces, and regional or hybrid, quasi-state forces. The plethora and fluidity of armed groups in Iraq frequently challenge definition. Formally, Iraqi law is clear that local police, the federal police, the counter-terrorism service and the army constitute the official security forces (Knights 2016). Armed groups operating “outside the framework of the armed forces” are prohibited under Article 9 of the Iraqi constitution. However, in practice it has not always been easy to distinguish official state forces from non-state (and thus illegal) forces. Before 2014, pro-government militias often acted at the government’s behest, especially during Prime Minister Maliki’s second term, from 2010 to 2014. Conversely, some would argue the formal state security apparatus often acts along sectarian or partisan lines. The Iraqi federal police were notably awash with Shi’a militiamen during the periods when the ministers of interior were linked to the Badr Organization, from 2005 to 2006 and 2014 to 2016. With the organization of non-state militias or local forces into the Popular Mobilization Forces

(PMF) in 2014, and formal incorporation into the security apparatus in 2016 (the full effect of which is yet unclear), the line between non-state armed groups and official forces has become even more attenuated.

Another tension in the definitions is the extent to which these groups could be defined as “local” or “community-based.” Prior to 2014, most of the pro-government militias – from the Sunni *sahwa*, or “Awakening” forces to the Shi’a militias – were overwhelmingly locally recruited and deployed, often performing local policing and security functions. With the onset of ISIL and the conflict in Syria, this dynamic has shifted. Shi’a militias fighting ISIL have been mobilized from Shi’a strongholds, in the south of the country, and deployed to the often predominantly Sunni heartlands that ISIL has taken over. From 2012 to 2014, many of these Shi’a militias, closely affiliated with Iran, were deployed in Syria to fight on behalf of Bashar al-Assad. Nonetheless, although nowhere near the number of Shi’a militia units, there are many units within the PMF that are drawn from local areas, from Sunni and Shi’a Arab, Turkmen, and Christian communities where fighting is taking place.

The Peshmerga are also difficult to categorize. Article 117 of the 2005 Iraqi Constitution allows regions to establish their own internal security services, the “police, security forces and guards of the region,” and the Peshmerga are legally recognized as one of these permissible regional groups (so far the only one). They have an organized command structure and effective control of territory that is more similar to a state entity than a militia or other armed group. In practice, they often behave like a state force, albeit sharing some of the similar political fluidity of Iraqi Security Forces and acting at the behest of political leaders or parties. Given all of these factors, the Peshmerga would arguably be categorized more as a state force, however, they are important to include as a point of comparison for some aspects of this project given the likelihood that other sub-state forces will be formalized, or that other regional forces will develop along the model (or at an equivalent status) to the Peshmerga. As the only regional force recognized so far, the Peshmerga present one end of the spectrum and may offer important comparative insights for future policy prescriptions surrounding the other groups.

For more detailed information and key facts on each of these groups, please refer to the Summary table in the annex to this report. The remainder of this question will focus on a discussion of the thematic questions, as discussed in existing literature by other research organizations, thinktanks, and authors.

## **1. Security Effectiveness**

*Key questions: What has been the contribution of LHSFs in addressing recent or ongoing security concerns in Iraq? Is there any evidence that LHSFs fare better or worse against transnational elements than state forces? In addition to supporting tactical gains against ISIL or opposition elements, is there evidence that LHSFs increase stability? Does reliance on these groups have negative repercussions for other security elements, such as on inter-ethnic, inter-communal, or inter-state violence?*

Most observers credit the PMF and the Peshmerga with being instrumental in stopping ISIL’s quick advance following the fall of Mosul in June 2014. These forces also spearheaded the initial offensives against ISIL in 2014 and have since participated in almost all major anti-ISIL campaigns alongside the Iraqi Security Forces. In addition to the PMF and Peshmerga, most also credit the forces aligned with

the Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK) with some substantial military victories, notably cutting a humanitarian corridor through ISIL's siege of Ezidis trapped on Mount Sinjar in August 2014 (see, Ali and Kagan 2014).

However, while popularly credited with decisively affecting the campaign against ISIL, there have so far been few studies that conclusively address how effective LHSFs in Iraq are at providing security and stability. RAND's Robinson (2016) ranks the military capability of three of the most relevant groups – the Peshmerga, the PKK-affiliated People's Defense Unit (YPG) and the PMF's Shi'a militias – higher than the Iraqi army's (but equal or lower than that of the Counter-Terrorism Service). Cigar (2015) and Robinson (2016) argue that compared to the formal security forces, local and hybrid security forces show signs of higher fighting morale, greater unit cohesion, and tactical superiority especially in areas where mechanized units cannot operate.<sup>1</sup> These estimations may also change over time. The strength of the PMF and non-state actors is largely due to the weakness and collapse of the ISF in 2014 when ISIL attacked, PMF and other LHSFs may have been the most effective security option at the time (O'Driscoll and Zoonen 2017). Since then, however, ISF have reformed and been rebuilt to an extent, and have had major battlefield successes (Cronk 2017), particularly the special forces of the Counter-Terrorism Service, and significantly more so than the PMF in places like Ramadi, Fallujah and during the initial stages of the Mosul campaign.

Other studies have pointed to evidence that the LHSFs contributions have been overstated, or highlighted significant weaknesses within LHSF forces in terms of security capacities. The Peshmerga and newly formed units within the Popular Mobilization Forces have comparably less relevant fighting experience and only rudimentary training, which impairs their effectiveness (Cigar 2015; Beck 2014). Contested or loose political control is another factor detracting from LHSF effectiveness, and there have been critiques of the strategic incoherence between different PMF units (Habib 2017; Sowell 2015a), and concerns about rivalries between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)- and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)-led Peshmerga (Fumerton and Van Wilgenburg 2015). Cigar (2015) points out that LHSFs engaged in the anti-ISIL campaign (particularly PMF) are highly dependent on the air support provided by the ISF and the US-led anti-ISIL Coalition. Toumaj (2017) cautions against overstating the role of the PMF; while central to the anti-ISIL campaign, most combat operations have been carried out by US-trained Iraqi Army and Counter Terrorism Services. Wehrey and Ahram (2015) argue that PMF failed to counter ISIL even with superior number of forces (see also Sowell 2015a). They also note the fact that many of the PMF refused to work with American forces, as well as the "campaign of terror" they unleashed on the Sunni population, makes them less than ideal military partners (Wehrey and Ahram 2015).

In addition to these capacity issues, many observers have raised similar concerns that reliance on LHSFs in the campaign against ISIL will raise greater long-term security concerns and instability (O'Driscoll and Zoonen 2017; Aziz 2016; Frentzel 2017). Many have argued that the unregulated and unaccountable nature of these militias, and the sectarian bent of many of them, will lead to instability in the future (Amnesty 2017a; Amnesty 2014). Pollack (2016a; 2016b) foreshadow more violence after ISIL's defeat in Mosul, as the grievances of Iraq's Sunni Arab population have only been exacerbated by the unlawful conduct of LHSFs in combat and beyond (e.g., preventing the return of displaced populations).

There has been less available research and analysis considering the security effectiveness of smaller minority militias or units within PMF and Peshmerga, or their contribution to stability, no doubt due to their small numbers and relatively peripheral role in much of the fighting.

## **2. State-building and Long-term Impacts**

*Key questions: How does the proliferation or reliance on LHSFs impact long-term political and conflict dynamics? How does empowering local security actors affect the development of the rule of law and legitimate governance, both locally and nationally? Is there potential for militias, local or regional security forces to rival state-led armed services, undermine state control and overall stability?*

While LHSFs in Iraq have received praise for their successes in the war against ISIL, many have argued the negative medium- and long-term consequences are likely to far outweigh current battlefield gains. The research and analysis that exist so far suggest that the presence of multiple and competing foreign-backed militias, which has characterized the Iraqi context for over two years, has challenged and delegitimized the authority of the state, deepened ethno-sectarian and partisan fault lines, and increased subnational (intercommunal, interethnic, and inter-militia) conflict.

With the military defeat of ISIL, other grievances and tensions might come to the fore, with LHSFs at the forefront of escalating intercommunal, interethnic or partisan conflict. Journalists and commentators have documented fault lines within the anti-ISIL coalition and suggested that with the defeat of the common enemy these underlying tensions will re-emerge, sparking conflict along sectarian and partisan fault lines between rival PMF factions or between the PMF and the Peshmerga (Mansour 2017a). Van den Toorn and Lacky (2014), Christoph Reuter (2016), and Iraq Oil Report (2015) have documented this type of subnational conflict emerging already in Tuz Khurmatu between Shiite Turkmen and Kurdish forces.. Mustafa Habib (2015) has warned that after the fall of ISIL, the three major divisions within the Shi'a militias may become more prominent and manifest into serious military and political conflict as the groups jockey for power in the lead up to 2017 provincial elections (see also Aghuan 2015).

Both Iranian-backed Shi'a militias and Western-backed Kurds have used their increased weaponry and territorial control to implement maximalist rather than 'accommodationist' policies in post-ISIL liberated areas, deepening divisions and animosities between ethno-sectarian communities. As Natali (2015) argues in a policy piece, "Peshmerga forces are using coalition air strikes to engineer territorial and demographic changes that are antagonizing Sunni Arabs—the very communities the United States needs on its side to degrade ISIS" (see also Puttick 2014). Shi'a militias have been accused of ethnic- or sectarian-based property destruction, and preventing Sunni populations from returning, with the effect of deepening sectarian tensions and increasing the chances of retaliation and sectarian violence across the country (Amnesty International 2017; Human Rights Watch 2017; Hiltermann 2016; Fahim 2015).

### **Undermining the Iraqi State**

A longstanding critique within the academic literature has been that supporting non-state forces can detract from long-term state-building by exacerbating competition for power and legitimacy in a state

already struggling to maintain authority and control (Hughes and Tripodi 2009). This argument has emerged forcefully in discussions of the growing power of the PMF and the decreasing perceived legitimacy and strength of the ISF (Sowell 2015b; Mansour 2016a). PMF raise a fundamental sovereignty issue for the Iraqi state, which will only increase if they become more powerful than the national army, some have argued (Davis 2016). In addition to security provision, O’Driscoll and Zoonen (2017) point out that organized groups within the PMF undermine state sovereignty by demanding political loyalty to them, and not to the state. Craig Whiteside (2016) has pointed to the underlying dilemma that, in order to defeat the Islamic State, the US and its Iraqi partners rely on sectarian actors, whose empowerment would undermine the prospects for reconciliation, which is necessary for long-term stability and state cohesion. Some would argue that the November 2016 PMF law passed by Parliament mitigates this risk by incorporating PMF into the ISF (and thus no longer presenting non-state competition for them); however, the full effect of this law and the degree of Iraqi state control over these forces in practice remains to be seen (Further discussion of possible effects of the law, and future PMF structures is in Mansour and Jabar 2017).

The PMF law includes a provision that PMF members may not seek public office, a potential response to concerns that the PMF militias would seek to expand political power in coming election cycles. Iranian-backed Shi’a militias have a history of infiltrating government offices, as noted by Perito (2008), and their ability to capture the state has only increased since 2014, as their perceived military effectiveness and greater control of their territory has enhanced their political power and position (Sowell 2015b). Writing for Carnegie in August 2015, Sowell (2015c) warned that, “[b]ecause of the war in Anbar, the 2014 parliament is more sectarian and more Shi’a Islamist than the 2010 parliament,” and current trends suggest further militia gains in the upcoming 2017 provincial elections and 2018 national elections.

In addition to threatening the legitimacy and governance of Iraqi institutions, if the past is any guide, increased integration of sectarian militia groups into the government would trigger future cycles of violence. Krieg (2014) has argued that Maliki’s reliance on sectarian militant groups was largely responsible for alienating Kurdish and Sunni communities, and pushed them into the arms of “religious militias, neighborhood watches, and tribal insurgent groups.” This was the primary reason for the failure of past security sector reforms, he argues, which opened the door for ISIL.

Finally, some commentators have expressed fears that greater Shi’a militia control over the government would increase Iranian control and influence on Iraqi politics (Young 2015), or potentially open the door for a shift to a more Iranian-style theocracy (McGeough 2012, *but see* Arango 2017, suggesting that this would just not play out in Iraq given the larger Sunni population and different cleric tradition in Iraq). Many have also expressed a fear that Iran’s influence over the most dominant Shi’a PMF groups, which have made territorial gains since 2014, allows Iran to de facto exert some level of territorial control or use of strategic areas in Iraq. Shi’a PMF’s now control or have significant influence in areas stretching from the Iranian border to Syria (Arango 2017, Majidiyar 2017). As Joost Hiltermann (2017) has argued, “[I]f Qasem Soleimani, the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps’ Qods (“Jerusalem”) force, wanted to travel from Tehran to Beirut, he could now do so by car, driving through territory that, while not necessarily hospitable, is controlled by either Iranian proxies or allies, or by groups with which he could strike a tactical deal.”

## **Impacts on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)**

Rather than uniting Kurdish forces under a “war against ISIL” banner, the conflict, and foreign backing, has further divided and increased the competition between Kurdish political parties (Helfont 2017; Fantappie 2015; Wahab 2015). The International Crisis Group (2015) warns about the possible fallout between the political factions controlling the Peshmerga following ISIL’s defeat – a process that has been accelerated by foreign assistance and little control over how the US-led Coalition’s arms are distributed among the KDP- and PUK-commanded forces of the Peshmerga (ICG 2015). This will tend to weaken democratic processes and governance within the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) (Wahab 2015). ICG (2015) also warns that Coalition support to the Peshmerga and efforts to empower the Kurds might also upset the delicate balance between Erbil and Baghdad, which will impact the debate over Kurdish independence and the long-due referendum that would decide control over Iraq’s disputed territories (DIBs) (see also van den Toorn and Mathieu-Comtois 2016; Hiltermann 2017). KDP leader Barzani announced plans to also hold the referendum areas in Kirkuk and other disputed territories, a move that did not necessarily represent a consensus decision by all Kurdish parties (Hiltermann 2017).

## **Regional Tensions**

Finally, the way that internal dynamics unfold in Iraq could trigger regional tensions across several different dimensions. The provision of weapons and support to Kurdish Peshmerga in Syria and cooperation with PKK-affiliated militias in Iraq have already raised Turkish concerns and led to more aggressive Turkish engagement in Iraq (Reuter 2017; Arango and Gordon 2016); most recently, the deployment of PKK-affiliated fighters and Iranian-backed Shi’a militias around Tel Afar, West of Mosul, have prompted a growing Turkish military presence (mainly along the border) and increased the likelihood of a more aggressive Turkish involvement in Iraq (Kavalek 2016). This tension could not only upset Turkey’s bilateral relations with Iraq and Iran, but could also hinder the potential for a regional framework for action to address ISIL or the issues in Syria (Natali 2015). The deployment of PKK-affiliated fighters and Iranian-backed Shi’a militias around Tel Afar, West of Mosul, has increased Turkish deployment along the border and the likelihood of greater Turkish military involvement in Iraq (Kavalek 2016). Turkey has also played a role in intra-Kurdish politics by providing substantial military and political support to the KDP (Washington Institute for Near East Policy 2016). A greater role and sway for Iranian-backed Shi’a militias could lead to Gulf monarchies arming Sunni militias, and could further destabilize the situation in Syria and Jordan (Moyar 2015). There is further concern that once the major conflict with ISIL is over in Iraq, Iraqi Shi’a militias might be redeployed to Syria, potentially re-escalating the conflict there (ACAPS 2014).

## **3. Human Rights and Protection Concerns**

*Key questions: What is the evidence of the human rights record of LHSFs? Are there any policy or academic studies that suggest whether LHSFs are better or worse in meeting protection standards? How do mechanisms such as human rights screening or vetting, training or other donor-enforced accountability mechanisms for those supported work in practice?*

Journalists, human rights activists, and international organizations have documented significant rights abuses by LHSFs. PMF militias stand accused of the most egregious rights violations, although Peshmerga and others have also been accused of committing serious violations of international and domestic law.

Human rights allegations have followed Shi'a PMF operations wherever they were deployed since 2014, with the most frequent and egregious allegations surrounding the conduct of the pro-Iranian militias, the Badr Brigades, the League of the Righteous and Hezbollah Brigades. HRW (2017) claims that since November of this past year about 800 Iraqi men and boys have disappeared, most likely at the hands of the Hezbollah Brigades. Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International (AI) documented human rights violations that follow a pattern of ethnic abuse and retaliation, using summary executions, torture, arbitrary detentions, and abuse against the Sunni population, including in Jurf al-Sakhr (Amnesty International 2017, HRW 2014, Rasheed and Georgy 2014, Parker and Rasheed 2014), near Muqdadia (AI 2015a, HRW 2016b), Tikrit (HRW 2015c) and Falluja (HRW 2016b). Such abuses have frequently been accompanied by large-scale patterns of forced displacement, property destruction and the prevention of return, according to the same reports. AI and HRW also noted significant property destruction in and around Suleiman Bek, near to Amerli, but did not report extrajudicial killings (AI 2014, HRW 2015a).

ISF have not been directly implicated in many of these abuses by these Popular Mobilization Forces, but HRW (2014), and AI (2017) have argued that ISF clearly is aware of these abuses, and permits them to go on or is unable to intervene, making it somewhat complicit. There have been allegations of ISF engaging in extrajudicial killings and other violations of international humanitarian law (IHL). A HRW (2017) report claims that during the effort to retake Fallujah from ISIL, government forces engaged in acts of torture and extra-judicial killings. HRW also reported that the Iraqi Army's 16<sup>th</sup> Division was detaining without charge, torturing and killing alleged ISIL fighters (HRW 2017b). There also have been allegations of indiscriminate use of weaponry, contributing to high civilian casualties, particularly in the Mosul Operations. Amnesty accused pro-government forces, in particular the Federal Police, of deploying indiscriminate weaponry in the campaign to retake West Mosul (AI 2017a). It reported Federal Police use of improvised rocket-assisted munitions (IRAMs) in the Old City, weaponry HRW describes as inaccurate and unlawfully indiscriminate when used in heavily populated areas (HRW 2017c). Of the different Iraqi forces, there have been long-standing complaints about Federal Police units' conduct, which are at least partially attributed to their infiltration by Shi'a militia groups (Parker 2015; 2015a; RISE 2017)).

The Peshmerga and other Kurdish forces have also been implicated in ethnic "clearing" policies – preventing or discouraging the return of Arab communities to DIBs through mass property destruction, or denying Sunni Arabs access to newly liberated areas. These allegations have sometimes risen to the level of ethnic cleansing in Nineveh, Erbil and Kirkuk governorates (HRW 2015b, 2016c, AI 2016). The Peshmerga have also been accused of collective punishment and mistreatment of the Sunni Arab populations, including unlawful detention, serious restrictions on movement, limitations to humanitarian aid, and looting and torching the property (including entire villages) of those suspected of supporting attacks against the Peshmerga (AI 2017; Van den Toorn 2016, HRW 2015b). AI (2017) also notes that internally displaced people (IDPs), particularly Sunni IDPs, have been subject to restrictions



on their movement and curtailment of government services by Iraqi and KRG authorities. They have also allegedly abused and tortured detainees suspected of links with ISIL, a violation of IHL (AI 2017; HRW 2015b).

Rights organizations have documented frequent retaliatory attacks against rival groups (or civilians associated with those groups) in DIBs by multiple different parties. Enmity between Kurds and Shi'a Turkmen in the recently liberated contested areas have resulted in a tit-for-tat between these PMF and Peshmerga forces, both often retaliating against civilians where their forces are harmed (HRW 2016a). Forces representing local communities have also engaged in unlawful retaliatory attacks. Reuters' Coles (2015) and AI (2015b) reported of summary executions perpetrated by Ezidi militias in areas north of Sinjar. The degree of Peshmerga complicity in these attacks is unclear, but the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) (2015) found that the PKK's Syrian affiliate, the YPG, and local Ezidi militias were responsible for the violations, not the Peshmerga.

Finally, in addition to abuses of civilians, multiple sides have been accused of forced recruitment and child soldiers, notably several PMF units, including the First Martyr Movement/Free Iraqis (AI 2017, Salama and Abdul-Zahra 2016), the Abbas Combat Division and the Peace Brigades (Wilke 2016); and the PKK's Syrian offshoot (IRIS field research in 2016). HRW (2016f) also found evidence of PMF brigades recruiting child soldiers from Debagan IDP camp in Erbil to fight ISIL.

## **Human Rights Accountability and Prevention of Abuse**

Despite significant and widespread abuses by many LHSFs, the lack of detailed information on the identity and affiliation of perpetrators have made criminal persecution and foreign sanctions difficult. Although in some cases the Iraqi government and the KRG have instituted commissions of inquiry, findings have not been shared publicly. For example, AI (2017) notes that following the kidnapping and execution of hundreds of young Iraqi men by PMF, the Abadi government established a committee to inquire into these acts, but no findings were made available to the public. In the case of the KRG, their findings did not correspond to those of HRW (2016c). There is no record of an LHSF member disciplined or sentenced by Baghdad or Erbil for committing gross human rights abuses in Iraq (HRW 2016c, Wilke 2016).

There is a lack of data on whether and how those training or supporting LHSFs – from the Iraqi government to foreign sponsors such as Iran or Western governments – address human rights concerns to ensure that LHSFs receiving security assistance do not commit abuses. Members of the US-led Coalition incorporate Laws of Armed Conflict (LOAC) and human rights in their training of the Peshmerga (MERI 2016), and reportedly raise complaints where allegations of abuse surface (Williams 2015).

There have also been limited instances of suspension of assistance where allegations of abuse or misuse arose. For example, Germany temporarily suspended arms exports to the Peshmerga in early 2016, following information that weapons it supplied were resold in markets. Many of the forces equipped or trained by the United States, directly or indirectly, would also be subject to vetting under the Leahy amendment, which would require units cut off from support where credible allegations of gross human

rights violations manifested (Serafino et al. 2014). The Leahy amendment only applies to state forces, however, so may not be applied to all forces being supported in Iraq. In 2016, the United States granted a one-year waiver to Iraq on the applicability of the US Child Soldiers Prevention Act. Absent this waiver, all security assistance funding would likely have been suspended, given the prevalence of allegations of use of child soldiers throughout pro-government forces (HRW 2016d).

## **4. Community Dynamics and Empowerment**

*Key questions: How does the mobilization of local security forces affect local power dynamics, the degree of community empowerment or political expression that communities have vis-à-vis other groups? Are LHSF forces in Iraq representative of local communities, and are they perceived as legitimate? Are LHSFs accountable to, or able to be controlled by local communities in any way?*

There have been relatively fewer studies that have specifically analyzed how LHSFs affect community empowerment at a micro-level (district or village), but there is some literature available on the preferences, concerns or political leverage of communities as a whole, at the level of entire sectarian or ethnic communities. This section will discuss perceptions of legitimacy and support for LHSFs among these larger communities or groups; the way that LHSFs conduct and empowerment will likely affect future community political preferences, reconciliation, and trust vis-a-vis other community groups; proposals for greater attention to grassroots, community-brokered solutions, decentralization, and local empowerment measures as a way to increase the chances of short- and long-term stability.

### **Legitimacy and Support of LHSFs**

The degree of legitimacy and support that particular LHSFs enjoy is a contested question, highly dependent on the differing regional, national and subnational political and identity conflicts, but also on the experience of particular communities with these forces.

Community support for PMF forces and the degree of legitimacy they enjoy is in general higher in areas where they are traditionally based and recruit from (typically in the south). Many pieces present evidence suggesting the level of community buy-in and strength of Iranian-affiliated militias such as the Badr Brigades, League of the Righteous, and Hezbollah Brigades in the Shi'a strongholds of Karbala, Basra, Al-Muthanna, and Babil (Cigar 2015; Sowell 2015a, 2015b). By contrast, Shi'a militias have low legitimacy and support in Sunni areas where they are currently engaged against ISIL, in part due to longstanding sectarian tensions but also because of the extensive human rights violations, sectarian retaliation, and prevention of return that were documented in the human rights section of this paper (Younis 2015; Sowell, 2015b; Mansour 2016b; Vimont 2015). Yet despite their reputation for being unpopular among Sunni tribes, there have been cases in which Sunni populations have joined and fought alongside Shi'a militias or PMF, notably Badr (Mello and Knights).

There have not yet been sufficient studies examining how inclusion of prominent local tribes and forces alongside PMF, ISF, or other 'outsider' forces increase the perceived legitimacy or local trust in operations. The decision to mobilize Sunni tribes in Anbar and in Ninevah (with estimates of 35,000 forces authorized, 20,000 in Anbar and 15,000 in Ninevah) as part of the Tribal Mobilization Forces

(Hashd al-Ashairi) appears at least partly motivated by such concerns, and by the negative reaction following PMF advances on Tikrit. Analyzing the operations around Falluja, Gulmohamad (2016b) noted that the stabilization phase was helped by the fact that there were local tribal forces and locally recruited police helping to reassure civilians and securing some areas.

Although some would argue that the Peshmerga and the KRG in general have gained legitimacy in the fight against ISIL (in part due to extensive foreign backing), the Peshmerga's image as protector of minorities in the DIBs was damaged when their forces retreated in Sinjar and other minority areas around Mosul ahead of ISIL's advance in the summer of 2014, exposing tens of thousands to violence (Chulov and Hawramy 2014). Natali (2015) argues that their so-called "scorched earth policy" in retaken Arab villages surrounding the KRI, as well as the fact that the Peshmerga have prevented the return of Arab families in some areas, have strained their relationship with local communities outside the KRI.

## **Co-option Versus Local Empowerment in Local Militias and Proxies**

The contest between the KRG and Baghdad for the control of DIBs has encouraged different co-option and alliance strategies with local Sunni and minority communities.

"Minority" militias and forces have existed in Iraq over the past decade, but their presence and power has increased since the ISIL attack. Persecution and violence under ISIL and during the anti-ISIL campaign has led many of the communities to mobilize their own forces since 2014, including tribal Sunni Arab, Ezidi, Turkmen, Shabak and Christian forces. Larger LHSFs such as the Peshmerga and the PMF seek to affiliate with these groups to take advantage of their local ties and knowledge, or to improve local legitimacy (Saadoun 2016, Salih 2015). Although often focused on local armed actors, Peshmerga and PMF forces have also attempted to co-opt local tribal or community leaders among both minority and Sunni Arab communities in Iraq's DIBs as they liberate them in order to extend control (Fantappie 2015; Jawoshy and Arango 2015).

The desire to manipulate, co-opt or control local forces in order to gain political influence is destabilizing local dynamics. Local leaders and communities are under significant pressure – either harassed and intimidated into supporting one side or another (Chapman 2016), or compelled to do so out of a pragmatic need for protection, access to services, and safe return for their communities (Fantappie 2015). Van den Toorn and Mathieu-Comtois (2016) argue that the mobilization of different Ezidi militia groups in Sinjar, with loyalties to different political parties or geographic constituencies, is likely to increase conflict risks and instability locally (see also Salih 2015). Christian militias are similarly split along national-level partisan cleavages (Henderson 2014). Mansour (2016b) argues that internal divisions within the Sunni community as a whole, which have arguably increased with the competition for local allies in DIBs, increases the political marginalization and disengagement of the Sunni community as a whole, which has made it a less active partner against ISIL or other radical Sunni groups

## **Displacement, Rule of Law and Governance Effects**

The cycles of conflict, and continuing competition between Baghdad and Erbil for the control of contested areas, have had significant socioeconomic and humanitarian consequences for local communities. Since 2014, fighting has led to mass displacement (IOM 2016) and significantly altered demographics across the DIBs, as well as within the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) (PAX 2016; USIP 2016), which is harboring large numbers of IDPs. Although far from the only factor, much of the displacement can be attributed to deliberate LHSF actions (Natali 2015; Puttick 2014; Fahim 2015; van den Toorn 2016b)

There has been little analysis so far on how the significant displacement, property loss, and other social and economic fallouts of communities across DIBs might affect local empowerment and participation in the near future, as this is still an open question. However, in the short term, control and policies applied by LHSFs may be preventing return and reconstruction. The United States Institute of Peace's (USIP) 2016 discussion of displaced communities' concerns and demands found that many IDPs do not return for fear of mass detentions and other LHSF abuses, or ongoing conflict between LHSFs, who are fighting over the control of some liberated areas (USIP 2016).

## **Grassroots Solutions Going Forward**

The recent literature and ongoing policy discussions have stressed how fundamental these community legitimacy and trust questions are to future reconciliation and stability. USIP's study of rule of law and security dynamics among communities in recently liberated areas warned that, "[g]iven the mistrust between returning communities, their tendency to isolate themselves along religious lines (Muslim, Christian, Ezidi, Shabak, etc.), and the formation of religious-based militias, communities' readiness to embrace all types of extremist ideologies will likely increase" (USIP 2016). Van den Toorn and Mathieu-Comtois' (2016) writing on Ezidi politics and Henderson's writing on Christian communities, offer similar warnings about how the fracturing of these communities and the lack of trust for those outside their communities encourages retaliation and cycles of conflict. In expectation of the campaign to retake, Wirya and van Zoonen (2017) analyze perceptions on reconciliation voiced by Shi'a and Sunni Turkmen, finding that reconciliation is overwhelmingly conceptualized as a security objective related to the safe return of IDPs. In order to mitigate obstacles caused by inter-communal distrust, they suggest integrating Sunni Turkmen into the force tasked with retaking Tal Afar, before formalizing security sector reform after liberation, the shared priority of Shi'a and Sunni Turkmen. Examining future Sunni political dynamics, Mansour (2016b) argues that retaliatory attacks and abuses by Shi'a PMF limit the chance of the Sunni community re-engaging with the Iraqi government or confronting ISIL, and thus contributing to the stability of Iraq in the future (see also Younis 2015, Vimont 2015). Similar to Gade (2017), he argues that power-sharing guarantees to the Sunni community -- more local autonomy and security (via a national guard) -- and reining in other militias (such as the Shi'a PMF) would help prevent the continuation of dynamics that led to the rise of ISIL (Mansour 2016b)

As a result, ongoing political discussions in Iraq and among international partners frequently stressed the importance of local legitimacy and of developing bottom-up, grassroots solutions in response to emerging security, reconciliation, and reconstruction challenges (see El-Hamed, 2015; USIP 2016). On

the security front, several have suggested that long-term stability will necessitate a greater level of community engagement and eventually empowering, for example, through a national guard that would include local Sunni forces in Sunni areas (Wehrey & Ahram 2014; El-Hamed 2015). Similar discussions about maintaining minority communities' forces, but integrating them alongside state forces are ongoing, albeit not fully developed in the literature. For example, van den Toorn and Mathieu-Comtois (2016) suggest that because of the Ezidi desire for revenge, mistrust of both the Iraqi government and the KRG, and fears of exclusion, it is important for Ezidi forces to participate the protection of Ezidi areas, perhaps through affiliation or integration to the Peshmerga or the ISF.

More broadly, emerging discussions about reconstruction and reconciliation have paid significant attention to local grassroots interests. In a public panel discussion in July 2016, Christine van den Toorn highlighted these community tensions and argued that bottom-up, grassroots political compromise, to be achieved through dialogue at the local level, is the best way to avoid the resurgence of violence in post-ISIL areas. (Wilson Center Panel 2016, comments by van den Toorn). An International Crisis Group Report (2017) report concurs, and it recommends that the Iraqi government focus more efforts towards empowering Sunni communities since their support is essential to preventing the return of ISIL. Practitioners have been developing strategies to better incorporate local buy-in to resolve immediate and medium-term reconstruction challenges. For example, USIP recommended establishing joint security and administrative committees that include tribal and community elders to facilitate safe and equitable vetting and return policies (USIP 2016). While important for future study, there has so far been little literature on the effectiveness or feasibility of different grassroots and community empowerment strategies in addressing ongoing issues with LHSFs in Iraq.

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## Annex: Summary Table of Local, Regional or Sub-State Defense Forces in Iraq

This reference guide provides a summary of the key attributes and important background information about the most significant LHSFs, as well as some of the smaller LHSFs that appeared in particular areas of the field research. Each of these LHSFs has slightly different relationships with the two main governance actors – the Baghdad-controlled Iraq government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) – and with local communities in areas where they are active. To help reflect these divisions, this reference guide has been organized into three subsections:

- Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) – This umbrella group reporting to the Iraqi government in Baghdad was created in mid-2014 to organize the popular mobilization of pre-existing and new militia groups and forces into the fight against ISIL. Although the most prominent groups are Shi’a forces from southern Iraq, the PMF includes sizeable Sunni forces, and a range of minority forces drawn from different areas.
- Kurdish Security Forces (KSF) – The majority of forces belonging to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) are controlled by either the Kurdish Democratic Party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, or belong to one of the mixed brigades under the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs. However, there are also a range of local forces, many drawn from minority communities in liberated areas, that act as subsidiary or affiliated forces to different KSF.

Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK)-affiliated groups – Although forces affiliated with the PKK did not feature strongly in the field research, they are an important part of the LHSF landscape in Iraq and are distinct from either PMF or KSF. PKK forces also have a number of local affiliates in liberated areas, many drawn from minority communities in the areas examined in the research.

### Popular Mobilization Forces

<p><b>Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF, PMU) (al-Hashd al-Shaabi)</b></p>	<p>Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), also known by the Iraqi term <i>al-Hashd al-Shaabi</i>, is the umbrella term used for all pro-Iraqi government militias since June 2014. As of February 2016, 120,000 PMF salaries were on budget, although it is difficult to know how closely that number approximates actual fighting forces, potentially as few as 60,000.<sup>2</sup> In November 2016, Parliament passed a law legalizing PMF, granting them equivalent ranks, benefits, and subject to the same military jurisdiction as ISF. The PMF comprises a minimum of 50 subgroups, although new groups emerge periodically in the ongoing conflict. Some of these groups have been longstanding since the 1980s, while others formed more recently in response to the threat from ISIL following the <i>fatwa</i> by Al-Sistani. Most PMF forces draw predominantly from Shi’a populations in southern Iraq, but since 2014 sizeable Sunni forces have also been incorporated into the PMF umbrella, particularly once the PMF was legalized in 2016 Shi’a Turkmen, Shabak, Christian and Yezidi brigades are also part of PMF forces. The Popular Mobilization Commission, led by National Security Advisor Falih al-Fayyadh,<sup>3</sup> reports to the prime minister’s office. However, the different affiliations or loyalties across PMF results in significant differences in terms of effective control by the joint operations command, with many of the strongest Shi’a groups reportedly more responsive to their own militia leaders, and some more directly responsive to Iran than to Iraqi leaders.</p>
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<p><b>Iran-affiliated Shi'a PMF</b></p>	<p>Many of the largest and most influential forces within the PMF are heavily influenced (and some controlled directly) by Iran. These include the Badr Organization, the League of the Righteous (Asa'ib Ahl al-Haqq), Hezbollah Brigades (Kata'ib Hizb-Allah), and the Khorasani Brigades. These militias are the best organized, best equipped and paid (with reports that Iran supports their salaries as well as equipment), and play a leadership role among other groups within the PMF. The leader of Badr organization Hadr Al-Ameri and the leader of the Hezbollah Brigades Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis significantly direct intra-PMF cooperation. Although there is imperfect command and control in the PMF and no direct linear responsibility, they are de facto responsible for much of the tactical and political decision-making of the PMF, and may direct operations for multiple PMF groups, including outside of their own groups.</p>
<p><b>Badr Organization</b> (Munazzama Badr; al-Jinah al-Askari)<sup>4</sup>  <b>Formed:</b> 1983  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Strength:</b>                      Around 20,000 as of February 2016<sup>5</sup>  <b>Leader:</b> Hadi al-Amiri  <b>Link to political party:</b> Badr Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longest-standing and largest PMF, formed by Iraqi exiles in Iran during the 1980s (as the “Badr Brigades”)<sup>6</sup></li> <li>• Developed active political arm after the 2003 US invasion, and integrated into Iraqi government structures, despite still significant ties to Iran</li> <li>• Have 22 seats in Iraq’s parliament;<sup>7</sup> Badr member Mohammed Ghabban held the key post of minister of interior (federal police, intelligence) until resigning in June 2016.<sup>8</sup> Since January 2017, Qasim Mohammad Jalal al-Araji, a senior Badr member, has been minister of interior.<sup>9</sup></li> <li>• Hadi al-Amiri, the leader of Badr, served as Transportation Minister from 2011-2014<sup>10</sup></li> <li>• Famous military success in early victory over ISIL in Jurf al-Sakhar (Babel governorate), and Amerli (Tuz district) in 2014</li> <li>• Reputation generally better in terms of conduct than Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq, Hezbollah Brigades, or the Khorasani Brigades; however, there have been serious allegations or rights abuses in some operations, particularly regarding unlawful detentions and poor treatment and abuse of detainees<sup>11</sup></li> <li>• Has a large Turkmen force in southern Kirkuk and southern Tuz (see below)</li> </ul>
<p><b>League of the Righteous</b> (Asa’ib Ahl al-Haqq)  <b>Formed:</b> 2006  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Strength:</b> 5,000-10,000 as of March 2015  <b>Leader:</b> Qais al-Khazali  <b>Link to political party:</b> Al-Sadiqun</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Splinter group from the Mehdi Army (officially disbanded in 2008), with alleged close ties to former PM Nouri al-Maliki and seen as the special operations unit of the PMF<sup>12</sup></li> <li>• Allegedly has received as much as \$1.5-\$2M a month from Iran<sup>13</sup></li> <li>• Several current or former commanders designated by US as global terrorists for attacks on US forces from 2006-2009<sup>14</sup></li> <li>• Refused to participate in Tikrit operation in opposition to US involvement (but after US insisted that it be withdrawn because of terrorist links)</li> <li>• Alleged HR violations in several operations (summary executions, kidnapping, arbitrary detention, torture, looting, mass destruction of houses); for example, in Tuz district, Muqdadiya (in Diyala), and Tikrit<sup>15</sup></li> <li>• Had a tiny locally based Sunni Arab contingent in al-Alam, Tikrit,<sup>16</sup> where HRW later alleged destruction by Sunni forces</li> <li>• Reportedly receives additional income from criminal activities<sup>17</sup></li> </ul>

<p><b>Hezbollah Brigades</b> (Kata'ib Hezbollah)<sup>18</sup>  <b>Formed:</b> 2007  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Strength:</b>                  Around 20,000 as of February 2016<sup>19</sup>  <b>Leader:</b> Jamal Jaafar Mohammed (aka Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly supported via Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Lebanese Hezbollah for training and advice</li> <li>• Only PMF listed as a terrorist group by the US (since 2009), with the leader designated as global terrorist (since 2009)<sup>20</sup></li> <li>• Formed the Harakat al-Nujaba (HN) in Syria in 2013. Leader of HN publicly stated he would support Iran's efforts to overthrow the Iraqi government<sup>21</sup></li> <li>• Leader of Hezbollah Brigades, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, is also the vice president of the PMF committee and its head of operations<sup>22</sup></li> <li>• Alleged HR violations in several operations (summary executions, kidnapping, arbitrary detention, torture, looting, mass destruction of houses) – for example, in Tuz district, Muqdadiya (in Diyala), and Tikrit.<sup>23</sup> Abuses are also alleged to be highly sectarian, particularly against Sunnis<sup>24</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>Imam Ali Brigades</b> (Kata'ib al-Imam Ali)<sup>25</sup>  <b>Formed:</b> 2014  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Strength:</b> n/a  <b>Leader:</b> Shibl al-Zaydi  <b>Link to political party:</b> Harakat al-Iraq al-Islamiyah</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New, well-trained and equipped Iranian proxy militia with close links to Hezbollah Brigades and Iran's Quds Force.</li> <li>• Abu Azrael, a commander, is a famous fighter that made waves in the media;<sup>26</sup> he was also praised by Sistani's office</li> <li>• Alleged HR violations, including beheading and burning of prisoners<sup>27</sup></li> <li>• Trained two Christian units called Kata'ib Rouh Allah Issa Ibn Miriam Brigades and Babylon, as well as a Yazidi group, the Sinjar brigade<sup>28</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>Khorasani Brigades</b> (Saraya al-Khorasani)  <b>Formed:</b> 2013  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Strength:</b> 3,000 as of February 2015<sup>29</sup>  <b>Leader:</b> Ali al-Yasiri  <b>Link to political party:</b> n/a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founded by an Iranian Arab commander with the IRGC's logo and named after the alias of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, this militia is the closest among the PMFs to Iran.</li> <li>• Allegedly, Iran sends all its training and logistical aid for all its PMF proxies through the Khorasani Brigades, whose logistics center is in Qadir Kerem (Suleimani governorate) on the road between Tuz Khurmatu and Iran<sup>30</sup></li> <li>• Alleged HR violations in Tuz district and Diyala. Reports indicate forces targeted and killed Sunni residents, and took competing Peshmerga forces hostage<sup>31</sup></li> <li>• Commander, Sayid Hamid Aljazairy, explicitly stated intentions to establish a political party to further engage in Iraqi politics (a possible violation of Iraqi law that prevents PMFs from engaging in political activity, but one that has not been enforced)<sup>32</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>Other prominent Shi'a PMF</b></p>	<p>There are a number of other prominent, predominantly Shi'a groups that fall under the PMF umbrella but must be distinguished from the above groups because they have a different relationship with the Iraqi (and Iranian) state, and they have a degree of independence from the other Shi'a PMFs and prominent PMF figures like Al-Ameri and al-Muhandis (and some openly reject this leadership or oppose these other PMF groups). These range from militias that openly claim that they do not accept orders from Iran or Iraq (most prominently the Peace Brigades) and militias more closely linked in with ISF leadership and command. This category of Shi'a</p>

	PMF is also different because most commentators assume that these forces would be more willing or ready to demobilize once the ISIL threat is extinguished than those in the above category.
<p><b>Peace Brigades</b> (Saraya as-Salam)  <b>Formed:</b> 2014 (but formerly known as Mahdi Army, 2003-2013)  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Strength:</b> 14,000 as of July 2016 (but only 3,000 are registered under PMF salary)<sup>33</sup>  <b>Leader:</b> Moqtada al-Sadr (but military commander is Sayyid Riyad)  <b>Link to political party:</b> Sadrist trend, al-Ahrar bloc</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly nationalist, populist movement that opposes Iranian influence in Iraqi politics and opposes Iranian interpretation of Wilayat al-Faqih</li> <li>• Spun off from Muqtada al-Sadr’s Shi’a insurgent force, the Mahdi Army; in their past iteration as Mahdi Army, members opposed American forces, and were accused of targeting American soldiers prior to withdrawal in 2011<sup>34</sup></li> <li>• Restarted in 2014 under the new name Saraya as-Salam, with the more aggressive Special Forces units of the Mahdi army forming their own group, the League of the Righteous (discussed above)</li> <li>• Important military achievement was stopping ISIL’s advance on Samarra in 2014, and still responsible for holding Samarra</li> <li>• Supports the integration of militias into the state and contests control by PMF leadership</li> <li>• Opposed by Badr Organization, with whom they have had violent clashes</li> <li>• Hakim al-Zamili (al-Ahrar) is head of parliamentary committee on security and defense</li> <li>• Little information about their human rights record, but their operations were temporarily frozen in February 2015 after allegations of mass destruction of houses in Amerli. They have also been accused of abuses against Sunnis and of overseeing death squads<sup>35</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>Abbas Combat Division</b>  <b>Formed:</b> 2014  <b>Strength:</b> 7,000  <b>Leader:</b> Sheikh Maytham Rahi  <b>Link to political party:</b> None</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pro-government force created by Sistani to protect Shiite shrines,<sup>36</sup> formally tied to the Abbas shrine in Kerbala</li> <li>• Perceived as a neutral actor: important role in mediation between Kurds and Turkmens in Tuz district; only Shi’a Arab force in Kirkuk</li> <li>• Despite Shi’ite orientation, a sizeable amount of Sunni members<sup>37</sup></li> <li>• Receive most weaponry and training from the Iraqi army and have remained loyal despite Iran’s attempts to influence the organization<sup>38</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>Ali al-Akbar Brigade</b>  <b>Formed:</b> 2014  <b>Strength:</b> 5,000  <b>Leader:</b> Sheikh Abdul Mahdi al-Karbalai  <b>Link to political party:</b> None</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created through a <i>fatwa</i> issued by Sistani to protect Shiite shrines</li> <li>• Strong ties to the Iraqi army, and often operating alongside them</li> <li>• Reportedly higher inclusion of Sunni members, as high as 20% by one estimate<sup>39</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Sunni PMF Groups</b></p>	<p>Mobilization of Sunni forces under the PMF was much slower than with Shi’a forces, in part due to past marginalization of Sunni actors from security forces and governance positions, and the <u>disbandment of the</u> Sunni Awakening groups in prior years. With the formalization of PMF as part of the legal security forces in November 2016, other Sunni forces that had been mobilized, and remained somewhat independent from the</p>

	<p>leadership of the Shi'a-dominated PMF, were formally swept under the larger PMF umbrella. Locals tend to nonetheless still make a distinction between the larger <i>hashd</i> forces and the so-called <i>hashd al-ashair</i>, or tribal forces. Rather than following national mobilization patterns, most tribal forces tend to be locally mobilized, and operate locally, with significant differences in mobilization patterns across governorates, and even across different cities or subdistricts within the same governorate. They often are strongly identified with their particular Sunni leader (as with former governor Nujaifi's forces), or with the larger forces they affiliate with. While some are more loyal to and take orders directly from Iraqi forces and local authorities, others strongly affiliate with and respond to orders from larger Shi'a PMF (a strong pattern among Sunni forces in Salah ad-Din). This can vary on a per unit basis, though, making it difficult to create large categorizations of the nature of these forces</p>
<p><b>Hashd al-Ashair (including Tribal Mobilization Forces)</b>  <b>Formed:</b> 2015  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Strength: As of May 2017,</b> 16,000 in Anbar;<sup>40</sup> 18,000 in Ninewa;<sup>41</sup> 2,000-3,000 n Salah ad-Din (<i>real fighting forces might be much lower</i>)  <b>Leader:</b> Various  <b>Link to political party:</b> Non-aligned, but often have individual political backers for specific units</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collective term for tribal Sunni forces who were popularly mobilized and integrated into the PMF; generally they receive salaries (\$500/month) through the Iraqi government, as with other PMF</li> <li>• In Anbar and Ninewa, Sunni forces were mobilized through US-supported Tribal mobilization Force (TMF) initiative</li> <li>• US-provided light weapons and equipment, and Coalition-led training given to TMF forces; of 18,000 authorized forces in Ninewa, 6000 had received training by May 2017</li> <li>• In TMF areas, Sunni forces tend to work alongside local authorities, police, and Federal Police; in other governorates, tribal forces tend to link with larger Shi'a PMF forces</li> <li>• Most TMF units are limited to 100-200 men with largest estimated at just over 600; other forces unaffiliated with the TMF program may be slightly larger</li> <li>• Most TMF employed in their local areas, in a local neighborhood guard function or manning checkpoints; non-TMF tribal forces' roles can vary from similar local duties to active combat or manning the frontlines</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ninewa Guards aka National Mobilization Forces (al-Hashd al-Watani)</b>  <b>Formed:</b> July 2014  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Strength:</b> approx. 3,000  <b>Leader:</b> Atheel al-Nujaifi  <b>Link to political party:</b> al-Muttahidun</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founded by Atheel al-Nujaifi, the then-governor of Ninewa</li> <li>• Reportedly drawn from former Iraqi police units from Mosul and local volunteers</li> <li>• Predominantly Sunni but also includes Kurds and other minorities from Ninewa</li> <li>• Significant training base in Zilkan in Sheikhan,<sup>42</sup> and operational base on the northern outskirts of Mosul</li> <li>• Received training from Turkish forces,<sup>43</sup> and reportedly receives some salary and equipment although this is denied by both Turkey and al-Nujaifi</li> <li>• Better trained, equipped, and organized forces are more active in frontline activities and more challenging operational tasks than most other Sunni forces</li> <li>• Formerly considered illegal by some groups, but the forces have since merged under the PMF umbrella</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other local or non-state forces affiliated with the Popular Mobilization Forces</b></p>	<p>A number of minority groups have set up their own forces under the Popular Mobilization Forces. Some fall under the general PMF command, others have integrated into one of the larger, Iranian-affiliated PMF forces, such as Badr.</p>

<p><b>Turkmen Brigades 16 and 52</b>  <b>Formed:</b> 2014  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Strength:</b> Over 3,000  <b>Leader:</b> Yilmaz an-Najjar (and variety of local commanders)  <b>Link to political party:</b> various (Badr is strongest)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of Shi'a Turkmen forces active in the southern parts of Kirkuk governorate and Tuz district (in Salah ad-Din governorate); headquarters in Tuz Khurmatu, the center of Tuz district</li> <li>• Brigade 52 is exclusively Badr; Brigade 16 includes a range of Turkmen proxies of Shi'a Arab PMF (Hezbollah Brigades, Peace Brigades, League of the Righteous, etc)</li> <li>• Local commanders have great autonomy but ultimately report to Hadi al-Amiri (Badr) and PMF operations commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis (Hezbollah Brigades)</li> <li>• Turkmen PMF have led many of the significant human rights abuses while holding territory or engaging in operations with Shi'a PMF including summary executions, kidnapping, arbitrary detention, torture, looting, mass destruction of houses; for example, in Tuz;<sup>44</sup> harassment, abuse, and destruction of the property of Arab residents, as well as blocked return of Sunni Arab residents in <u>Tuz</u> and Kirkuk</li> </ul>
<p><b>Shabak forces (including Babylon Brigade)</b>  <b>Formed:</b> November 23, 2014<sup>45</sup>  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Strength:</b> 1,000  <b>Leader:</b> Hunain Qaddo  <b>Link to political party:</b> linked to Badr Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprised mostly of Shi'a Shabak with substantial numbers drawn from Ninewa Plains area, and Shi'a Arabs<sup>46</sup></li> <li>• Operating across the Ninewa Plains and in Mosul, including controlling many checkpoints and areas from Bartella leading into Mosul</li> <li>• Units have also been involved in military operations in Nimrud and Qayarah</li> <li>• Babylon Brigades (under Christian leader Rayan al-Kildani) gaining reputation for revenge attacks and abuses against Sunnis in their area of operations, prompting rejection by many other Christian groups and leaders</li> <li>• HRW reported that Shabak forces were involved in extrajudicial arrests of Sunni residents in areas near Mosul<sup>47</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>Ninewa Plains Protection Unit (NPU)</b>  <b>Formed:</b> 1980s (with different name)  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Strength:</b> approx. 3,000 forces as of February 2015<sup>48</sup>  <b>Leaders:</b> Gen. Behnam</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pro-Baghdad Christian militia</li> <li>• Armed wing of pro-Baghdad Assyrian Democratic Movement (one of the two largest Iraqi Christian parties)</li> <li>• Primarily a self-defense, rather than an offensive force</li> <li>• Only Christian militia with members who have received some US-led Tribal Mobilization Force (TMF) training</li> <li>• Currently holding the southern Ninewa Plains, notably in Qaraqosh</li> </ul>
<p><b>Protection Force of Ezidzan (Hêzen Parastina Êzîdxanê, HPE)</b>  <b>Formed:</b> 2015  <b>Active:</b> Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yazidi forces with frequently changing allegiances, most recently paid by Baghdad as part of PMF</li> <li>• Active in Sinjar, mainly in the northern portions as of June 2016,<sup>49</sup> military base near Sherefedin</li> <li>• Formerly known as Sinjar Protection Forces (Hêzen Parastina Shingal, HPS)</li> </ul>

<p><b>Strength:</b> 2,500 trained fighters (approx. 8,000 associated with the group) <b>Leader:</b> Haider Shesho</p>	
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### Kurdish Security Forces

<p><b>Peshmerga Forces</b></p>	<p>With an estimated 190,000 to 250,000 fighters, the Peshmerga is the largest active force in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the Disputed Territories (although significant numbers of ghost forces are estimated).<sup>50</sup> The Peshmerga’s level of command, control and organization puts it closer to a state force. The Peshmerga comprise different types of security forces – including military, police, intelligence, minority brigades, private militias – that break down along party lines and report to the leadership of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Aside from party-commanded forces, there is a nominally independent, integrated Peshmerga force of 14 brigades, the Regional Guard Brigades, which have split command between the KDP and the PUK, and formally fall under the command of the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs. Minorities, including Sunni Arabs, Christians and Yazidis can and do join the Peshmerga as soldiers, and some have formed minority brigades within the Peshmerga.</p>
<p><b>Regional Guard Brigades</b> <b>Formed:</b> 2010 <b>Active:</b> Yes <b>Strength:</b> 14 Regional Guard Brigades, approx. 40,000<sup>51</sup> <b>Leaders:</b> KRG President Masoud Barzani and KRG Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs (formally); PUK and KDP political leaders (de facto)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated Peshmerga under Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs, but de facto under PUK and KDP party control</li> <li>• Leadership positions distributed along 50-50 principles: brigades headed by KDP commanders have PUK deputy commanders, and vice versa</li> <li>• Training provided at KTCC sites by a 9-member coalition (trainers provided by Italy, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Finland, the United Kingdom, Turkey; Slovenia has one administrative member), with weapons and equipment provided by the United States</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>KDP-commanded Peshmerga</b> <b>Division 80</b> <b>Formed:</b> 1970s <b>Active:</b> Yes <b>Strength:</b> approx. 50,000 fighters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KDP affiliated Peshmerga units divided among regular units (Division 80), Zerevani (a special forces unit, which fall under the KRG MoI), and counter-terrorism forces</li> <li>• Primary areas of operation in KDP zones of control (western half of Iraqi Kurdistan), Kirkuk, and Sinjar</li> <li>• Reportedly receive Turkish support, including training at Bashiqa air base near Mosul</li> <li>• Implicated in allegations of ethnic “clearing” policies – preventing the return of Arab communities once an areas has been cleared of ISIL</li> </ul>



<p><b>Leaders:</b> KRG President and KDP leader Masoud Barzani (formally and de facto)</p>	
<p><b>PUK-commanded Peshmerga</b>  <b>Formed:</b> 1970s  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Strength:</b> approx. 48,000 fighters  <b>Leader:</b> KRG President Masoud Barzani (formally); PUK SG Jalal Talabani (de facto)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PUK affiliated units typically divided according to regular units (Division 70) and Deja Terror (Counter-terrorism Forces)</li> <li>• Operate in PUK zones of control: (eastern half of Iraqi Kurdistan), Kirkuk</li> <li>• Reportedly have some support from Iran in the past but unclear in what form</li> <li>• Active in front-line combat against ISIL</li> <li>• Implicated in allegations of ethnic “clearing” policies – preventing the return of Arab communities once an area has been cleared of ISIL</li> </ul>
<p><b>Local or non-state forces affiliated with the Peshmerga</b></p>	<p>A number of minority groups have established forces under the Peshmerga, including Shabak, Kakai, Yazidis and Christians. There is generally little information available about these groups and their conduct in war. They generally report to the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs, and tend to work within the KDP-led structure.</p>
<p><b>Yazidi Peshmerga</b>  <b>Formed:</b> 2014  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Strength:</b> approx. 10,000 fighters<sup>52</sup>  <b>Leader:</b> Qasim Shesho</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Yazidi brigade allied with the Peshmerga</li> <li>• Active in Sinjar</li> </ul>
<p><b>Rojava Peshmerga</b>  <b>Formed:</b> 2014  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Strength:</b> 3,000-6,000 fighters<sup>53</sup>  <b>Leader:</b> Brig. Gen. Mohammed Rejeb Dehdo</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consist of Syrian Kurdish soldiers who fled the Syrian Army (but disagree with YPG/YPJ)<sup>54</sup></li> <li>• Training by the KDP-Peshmerga (Zeravani forces)<sup>55</sup> and reportedly possible training by Turkey</li> <li>• Intra-Kurdish differences prevent the militia from returning to Syria; hence, they fight ISIL in Iraq<sup>56</sup></li> <li>• Active mostly on southern fronts, Mosul and Kirkuk, and Syrian border near Sinjar and <u>Rabi’a</u></li> </ul>
<p><b>Jazeera Brigade</b>  <b>Formed:</b> 2017  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Strength:</b> 2,000  <b>Leader:</b> Brig. Gen. Bolond Hussayn<sup>57</sup></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A tribal force under the KDP-Peshmerga (Zeravani forces)</li> <li>• Fighters hail from Kurdish-controlled Tal Afar district (Rabi’a, Ayadiya, Zummar)</li> <li>• One unit of Arab fighters, the Ninewa Lions of <u>Rabi’a</u>, was originally part of the US-supported TMF forces, but switched over</li> <li>• Primary goal is to hold areas cleared by KDP-aligned Kurdish forces; link between local tribal populations (primarily Sunni Arab) and the Kurdish forces</li> </ul>

<p><b>Ninewa Plains Guard Force (NPGF)</b>  <b>Formed:</b> 2004  <b>Active:</b> yes  <b>Strength:</b> approx. 2,500 fighters  <b>Leader:</b> Sarkis Aghajan Mamendo (unconfirmed)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Largest and most long-standing Christian militia, formed as a local guard force in the Qaraqosh area beginning in 2004</li> <li>• KRG-affiliated, have received training from and are integrated under the KDP Zerevani</li> <li>• Assigned to hold the north Ninewa Plains area (around Tal as-Soqf) along with NPF</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ninewa Plains Force (NPF)</b>  <b>Formed:</b> 2014  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Strength:</b> reportedly approx. 500 as of July 2015<sup>58</sup>  <b>Leader:</b> Romeo Hakari</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the two pro-KRG Assyrian Christian militias in Iraq</li> <li>• Equipment and training by the Peshmerga<sup>59</sup></li> <li>• Linked to Bet-Nahrain Democratic Party</li> <li>• Operating north of Mosul alongside NPGF, assigned to help hold areas near Tal as Soqf<sup>60</sup></li> <li>• Tend to act as an auxiliary or supporting unit fighting alongside KDP Peshmerga, including in some frontline activities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Dwekh Nawsha</b>  <b>Formed:</b> 2014  <b>Active:</b> yes  <b>Strength:</b> 100 to 250 estimated,  <b>Leader:</b> Lt. Col. Odisho</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All-volunteer force linked to the Assyrian Patriotic Party</li> <li>• Trained and equipped by Peshmerga</li> <li>• Operating near Tel as Soqf, north of Mosul</li> <li>• Troops wear Zerevani badges<sup>61</sup></li> <li>• Reportedly receive some weapons and funding from the KDP, but are not as clearly acting as official sub-units of Kurdish forces as the NPGF or NPF are</li> <li>• Reportedly includes up to 250 volunteers and a few foreigners<sup>62</sup></li> </ul>

### PKK-affiliated groups

<p><b>Other local or non-state groups</b></p>	<p>A number of local or non-state forces operate independently from the Popular Mobilization Forces and the Peshmerga; most notably, the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and its affiliates. Known primarily for its armed struggle against the Turkish state and movement for Kurdish autonomy, the PKK also took a significant part in the fight against ISIL in Syria via its local affiliate, the People's Protection Units (YPG). The YPG is widely lauded for saving thousands of Yazidis in Sinjar, Iraq, by opening up an escape corridor in August 2014 to Rojava, Syria. The PKK's and its affiliates' success in Iraq and Syria have created a new center of gravity for LHSFs that do not sympathize with the KRG's Peshmerga or Baghdad. For example, the most active Yazidi self-defense force, the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS), is trained and supported by the PKK and the YPG. The Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS), for instance, are</p>
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	<p>hostile to KRG-affiliated forces operating on the Zummar-Rabi'a front; these claimed that they could stage operations in Sinjar, which could potentially lead to conflict with the PKK-supported YBS.</p>
<p><b>People's Defense Forces</b> (Hêzen Parastina Gel, HPG)  <b>Formed:</b> 1984 (PKK formed in 1978)  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Strength:</b> 7,000-10,000 troops<sup>63</sup>  <b>Leader:</b> Murat Karayilan (de facto PKK leader since 1999 and commander in chief of HPG)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Armed wing of PKK leading struggle for Kurdish autonomy in Turkey</li> <li>• HQ in Qandil mountains (PUK zone of control) but only began active combat operations in Iraq (Sinjar and Makhmour) in August 2014, where it was credited for important anti-ISIL military successes</li> <li>• Iran provides covert logistical and financial support according to Turkish intelligence,<sup>64</sup> but otherwise largely self-supported (reportedly with criminal activities and trafficking)<sup>65</sup></li> <li>• In April 2016, PKK offered to contribute 4,000 fighters to the Mosul operation, pending Iraqi government approval</li> <li>• Listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, NATO, the United States, and the EU. The UN and other countries such as Switzerland, China, India, Russia and Egypt do not consider it to be a terrorist organization</li> <li>• Reported human rights violations, including forced recruitment</li> </ul>
<p><b>People's Defense Forces</b> (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel, YPG)  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Leader:</b> Nasreen Abdullah and Cihan Cendal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Armed wing of the PYD leading the struggle for Kurdish autonomy in Syria</li> <li>• While disputed, branch of the PKK and HPG</li> <li>• Came to the rescue of Yezidis when they were trapped on Mt. Sinjar after ISIL attacked August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014</li> <li>• Reputation as hardened, well organized soldiers</li> <li>• Supported by the US and Coalition forces in the fight against ISIL in Syria</li> <li>• Has a female-only equivalent, the YPJ, which is present in Rabi'a (Tal Afar district), among other places</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sinjar Resistance Units</b> (Yekîneyên Berxwedana Şengalê, YBS)  <b>Formed:</b> 2015  <b>Active:</b> Yes  <b>Strength:</b> 1,500-2,000 as of 2014<sup>66</sup>  <b>Leader:</b> Khider Salih, head of the Autonomous Administrative Council, the political wing of YBS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founded by PKK and the YPG who continue to provide some military training and logistical support.<sup>67</sup></li> <li>• Iraqi Central Government provides financial support, paying the salaries of 1,000 fighters<sup>68</sup></li> <li>• Often portrayed as PKK-tool, but its leader argues the PKK does not control them<sup>69</sup></li> <li>• Mostly Yazidi membership</li> <li>• Has a female equivalent, the Ezidxan Women's Units (Yekinêyen Jinên Êzîdxan, YJE), led by Da Shiereen Saleh (formerly known as Sinjar Women's Protection Units)</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> There is also a much deeper academic literature addressing the advantages of militias in countries including but not limited to Iraq. Seth Jones has argued that militias historically have advantages in terms of intelligence gathering, reporting on insurgent activity, and “protecting and governing the population.” Seth Jones, *Strategic Logic of Militias* (RAND: 2012) p. 16-17, available at [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/working\\_papers/2012/RAND\\_WR913.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/working_papers/2012/RAND_WR913.pdf). Stathis N. Kalyvas has found that militias can play an important role in counterinsurgency because they can hold local areas, are effective against rebels, and relatively easy to form and recruit, and offer advantages in intelligence gathering. Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge University Press: 2006), p. 108. Goran Peic found that “incumbents” (state forces) are significantly more likely to defeat insurgents when they deploy militias. Goran Peic *Civilian Defense Forces, State Capacity, and Government Victory in Counterinsurgency Wars*, 2014, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 37:2, 162-184.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Knights, “Iraq’s Popular Demobilization,” *Al-Jazeera English*, February 26, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/02/iraq-popular-demobilisation-160224050939178.html>; Michael Knights, *The Future of Iraqi Armed Forces* (Baghdad: Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> For his profile, see, “فلاح فياض قوته في صمته,” *Asharq Al-Awsat*, August 5, 2015, <http://aawsat.com/home/article/422371/%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B6-%D9%82%D9%88%D8%AA%D9%87-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B5%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%87>.

<sup>4</sup> “Badr Organization,” Counter Extremism Project, accessed August 18, 2017, <http://www.counterextremism.com/threat/badr-organization>; Susannah George, “Breaking Badr,” *Foreign Policy*, November 6, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/11/06/breaking-badr>.

<sup>5</sup> Knights, “Iraq’s Popular.”

<sup>6</sup> Dylan O’Driscoll and Dave van Zoonen, *The Hashd al-Shaabi and Iraq Subnationalism and the State* (Erbil: Middle East Research Institute, 2017), <http://www.meri-k.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/PMF-Report-0.2.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Loveday Morris, “Appointment of Iraq’s New Interior Minister Opens Door to Militia and Iranian Influence,” *The Washington Post*, October 18, 2014, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/appointment-of-iraqs-new-interior-minister-opens-door-to-militia-and-iranian-influence/2014/10/18/f6f2a347-d38c-4743-902a-254a169ca274\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/appointment-of-iraqs-new-interior-minister-opens-door-to-militia-and-iranian-influence/2014/10/18/f6f2a347-d38c-4743-902a-254a169ca274_story.html).

<sup>9</sup> O’Driscoll and van Zoonen, *Hashd al-Shaabi and Iraq*.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> “Iraq: Ban Abusive Militias from Mosul Operation,” *Human Rights Watch*, July 31, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/07/31/iraq-ban-abusive-militias-mosul-operation>; “Iraq: Ethnic Fighting Endangers Civilians Kurds, Turkmen, Arabs Clash in Northern District,” *Human Rights Watch*, January 13, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/13/iraq-ethnic-fighting-endangers-civilians>; Human Rights Watch, *Ruinous Aftermath. Militias Abuses Following Iraq’s Recapture of Tikrit* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2015), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/09/20/ruinous-aftermath/militias-abuses-following-iraqs-recapture-tikrit>.

<sup>12</sup> O’Driscoll and van Zoonen, *Hashd al-Shaabi and Iraq*.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Chulov, “Controlled by Iraq, the Deadly Militias Recruit Iraq’s Men to Die in Syria,” *Guardian*, March 12, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/12/iraq-battle-dead-valley-peace-syria>.

<sup>14</sup> Abu Dura and Mustafa al Sheibani were added to the US global terrorist lists in January 2008, and are reported to have returned to Iraq and implicitly re-engaged. A number of other former leaders or commanders from the League of the Righteous were also added to the US global terrorist list for their coordination of or engagement in attacks against US forces from 2006 to 2009, but it is unclear if some of these other commanders have re-engaged with

the League of the Righteous in current operations. Bill Roggio, “US Airstrikes in Amerli Supported Deadly Shi’a Group,” *Long War Journal*, September 2, 2014, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/09/us\\_airstrikes\\_in\\_ame.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/09/us_airstrikes_in_ame.php).

<sup>15</sup> See *supra* note 11.

<sup>16</sup> W.G. Dunlop, “Iraqi Sunnis Joined Feared Shi’a Militias to Fight IS,” *Yahoo News*, March 13, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/iraqi-sunnis-join-feared-shiite-militia-battle-213921399.html?ref=gs>.

<sup>17</sup> Dina al-Shibeeb, “Iraqi Tribes Ready to Join Anti-ISIS Volunteer Forces, Says PMU Official,” *Al-Arabia English*, September 28, 2015, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/profiles/2015/09/28/Iraqi-tribes-ready-to-join-anti-ISIS-volunteer-forces-says-PMU-official.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Babak Dehghanpisheh, “Special Report: The Fighters of Iraq Who Answer to Iran,” *Reuters*, November 12, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-militias-specialreport-idUSKCN0IW0ZA20141112>.

<sup>19</sup> Knights, “Iraq’s Popular.”

<sup>20</sup> “Treasury Designates Individual, Entity Posing Threat to Stability in Iraq,” *U.S. Department of Treasury Press Center*, July 2, 2009, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg195.aspx>; “Designation of Kata’ib Hizballah as a Foreign Terrorist Organization,” U.S. Department of State, accessed August 18, 2017, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/july/125582.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> O’Driscoll and van Zoonen, *Hashd al-Shaabi and Iraq*.

<sup>22</sup> Nour Malas, “The Militia Commander Beating Back ISIS in Iraq Makes the U.S. Nervous,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 2, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-militia-commander-beating-back-isis-in-iraq-makes-the-u-s-nervous-1464890675>.

<sup>23</sup> See *supra* note 11.

<sup>24</sup> O’Driscoll and van Zoonen, *Hashd al-Shaabi and Iraq*.

<sup>25</sup> Matthew Levitt and Phillip Smyth, “Kataib al-Imam Ali: Portrait of an Iraqi Shiite Militant Group Fighting ISIS,” *Washington Institute*, January 5, 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/kataib-al-imam-ali-portrait-of-an-iraqi-shiite-militant-group-fighting-isis>.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>52</sup> Christine McCaffray van den Toorn, “The Wars after the War for Sinjar. How Washington Can Avert a New Civil War,” *War on the Rocks*, June 20, 2016, <http://warontherocks.com/2016/06/the-wars-after-the-war-for-sinjar-how-washington-can-avert-a-new-civil-war/>.

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<sup>55</sup> David Ignatius, “How the Kurds’ Neighbors Play Games to Block the Expansion of ‘Greater Kurdistan,’” *Washington Post*, May 27, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2016/05/27/kurdish-factions/>.

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<sup>57</sup> “Peshmerga Graduates the First Class of Arab Volunteers from Ninewa,” *Al Jazeera*, August 2, 2017,

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<sup>58</sup> Matt Cetti-Roberts, “Inside the Christian Militias Defending the Nineveh Plains: Some Work with the Peshmerga, Some Don’t—and They Only Trust Their Own,” *War Is Boring*, March 6, 2016, <https://warisboring.com/inside-the-christian-militias-defending-the-nineveh-plains-fe4a10babeed#.7uusgok1r>; Salih, “With the Islamic State Gone.”

<sup>59</sup> Cetti-Roberts, “Inside the Christian Militias.”

<sup>60</sup> Based on interviews with NPF representatives, members of the KTCC, and diplomatic officials involved with the Coalition, the NPF have received training as part of the Peshmerga through the KTCC, which is the Peshmerga training program supported by nine coalition members, including Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Hungary, among other nations.

<sup>61</sup> Peter Henderson, “Iraq’s Christian Paramilitaries Split in IS Fight,” *Al-Monitor*, October 30, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/10/iraq-christian-paramilitary-forces-nineveh.html>.

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<sup>63</sup> 5,000 fighters in Sinjar area and hundreds more along the Makhmour frontline, as of April 2016. An additional 3,500 troops in Turkey (Nusaybin area), as of 2013. Approx. 300 fighters in northern Syria, mainly Kobane (Ayn al-Arab), Derik (Al-Malikiyah), and Afrin regions.

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<sup>64</sup> Cengiz Çandar, “Turkey Claims Iran Providing Logistical Support for PKK,” *Al-Monitor*, December 30, 2012, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2012/al-monitor/iran-turkey-shiite-sunni-pkk.html#ixzz4F3J33gkt>.

<sup>65</sup> In 2007, STRATFOR estimated the PKK makes \$300-400 million per year from related activities. Another source puts the PKK’s budget at its peak in the 1990s at about \$86 million per year. In 2002, Germany’s chief prosecutor asserted that “80 percent of narcotics seized in Europe were linked to the PKK or “other Turkish groups” which then have used the profits from illegal narcotics to purchase arms.” Glenn E. Curtis and Tara Karacan, *The Nexus among Terrorists, Narcotics Traffickers, Weapons Proliferators, and Organized Crime Networks in Western Europe* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress – Federal Research Division, 2002), 20, [https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/pdf-files/WestEurope\\_NEXUS.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/pdf-files/WestEurope_NEXUS.pdf); See also, “Treasury Sanctions Supporters of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) Tied to Drug Trafficking in Europe,” *U.S. Department of Treasury Press Center*, February 1, 2012, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1406.aspx>; Denise Natali, “Can Ocalan Rein In the PKK?” *Al-Monitor*, January 17, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/01/ocalan-tuks-pkk.html#ixzz4FifcTzAR>.

<sup>66</sup> Shamal Abdullah, “Yazidis Form Militia to Protect Sinjar Mountain,” *ANIA*, August 6, 2014, <http://www.aina.org/news/20140806125221.htm>.

<sup>67</sup> Joanna Paraszczuk, “Yazidi Militias Fight IS In Iraq, Amid Kurdish Rivalries,” *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, June 11, 2015, <http://www.rferl.org/content/islamic-state-yazidi-militias-kurdish-region/27066780.html>.

<sup>68</sup> Van den Toorn, “Wars after the War.”

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.