

Incidents of Anti-Shiism in September , 2017

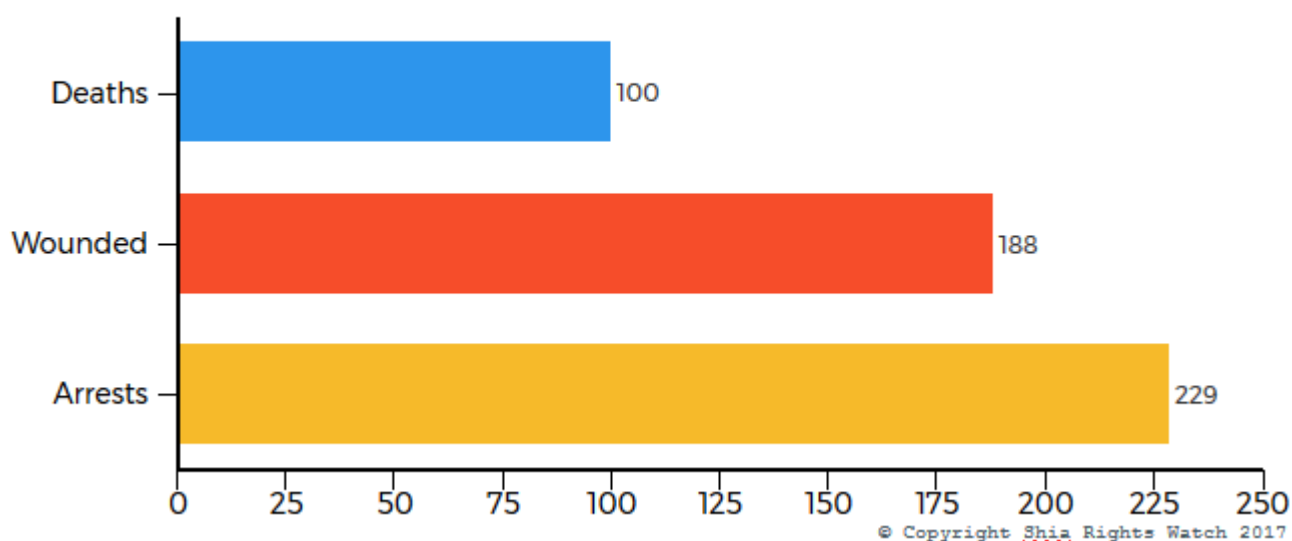
September Monthly Analysis

Shia Muslims all over the world began their commemoration of the holy month of Muharram late September. Shia religious expression is augmented in the beginning in early Moharram thus making them susceptible to targeting by anti-Shia groups. SRW Muharram safety advisory and more information on Shia and Moharram can be found on ShiaRightsWatch.org.

In Gulf nations such that of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain a fresh wave of arrests and travel bans have been issued. This recent increase in crackdowns correlates with the 2017 United Nations Human Rights Council meeting. The analyst believes restrictions are in an attempt to limit reports of anti-Shiism in the meeting.

Overall, 517 cases of anti-Shiism have been seen in the month of September-100 deaths, 188 injuries, and 229 arrests. Trends of anti-Shiism are nation-specific. Gulf-nations, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain have had Shia arrests, detainments and travel bans. Iraq and Afghanistan are home to the targeting of Shia dominated routes of travels as well as well-known religious sites.

Cases of Anti-Shiism



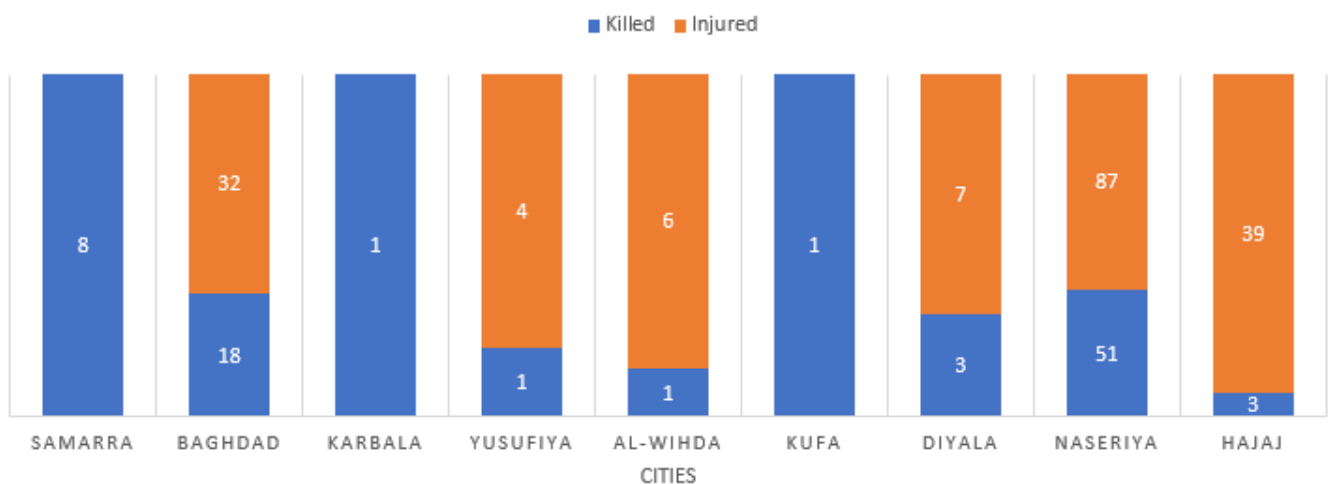
Iraq

Trends in anti-Shiism have been perpetrated by ISIS extremists. However, in addition to targeting Shia populated areas, incidents in September display a shift in targets. Twin blasts in Hajaj, Salahedin province, targeted a restaurant frequented by Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), a prominently Shia anti-ISIS group. A third assailant was shot before the detonation of his suicide belt.

Recent attacks target Popular Mobilization force members and their families. Even when not on duty, members of the PMF are followed and killed. While ISIS killings have been, and continue to be bombs that target a large mass, there exists a recent shift towards individual assassinations by firearm.

Shia Rights Watch requests a report on new security measures taken up to meet new shifts in violence.

IRAQ: CASES OF ANTI-SHIISM



Bahrain

The prevalence of restrictions on religious expression and congregation in Bahrain sets this report apart from previous reports. Beginning early September, Bahraini officials called upon religious scholars and centers ordering limitations in visibility and restriction of religious expression to inside religious centers. The ministry of interior furthered that failure to meet the new guidelines will result in detention and torture. Days following the threats, security forces raided numerous Shia villages, namely Shahrakan, Jid Ali, Malkiya, Ekr, Abu Saiba,

Shakhura, Sitr, and Karzakan, removing visible banners, posters, and flags that mark the commemoration of Muharram. Also, any and all civil services such that of food and drink donations have been placed under scrutiny. Shia Rights Watch sources report forces ripping down Muharram symbols (flags and banners) in different towns, even arresting people who displayed the symbols. Some of those arrested were released after forced agreements to stop displaying Moharram symbols.

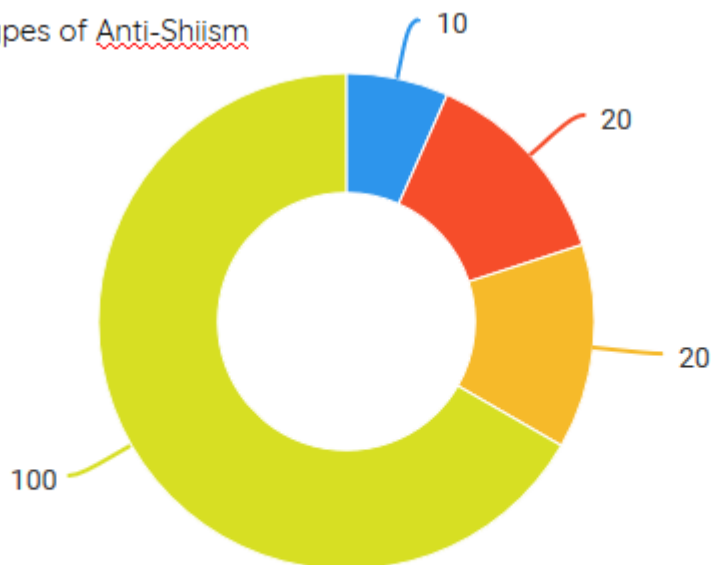
In the town of Diraz, in addition to tearing down commemoration signs, forces stopped commemorators from attending Imam al- Sadiq mosque. It must be mentioned that Shia in Diraz remains banned from holding Friday prayers.

Prominent activist like (but not limited to) Farida Ghulam, Jalila al-Salman, Mohammad Issa Al-Tajer, Fatimah al-Halwaji and Hussain Radhi has been placed on travel limitations and summoned for questioning by the Bahraini public prosecutor. In addition to activists themselves, a family of activists has been used as leverage against activists. On numerous account were family members of human rights activists called upon in local and national police stations.

Despite immense attempts by the Bahraini government to limit Shia presentation at the United Nations Human Rights Council held this month, human rights activists were still able to deliver oral statements, reporting discrimination and systemic targeting of the Shia majority in this nation.

Despite the prevalence of arrests and torture, morale remains high among inmates and activist. In mid-September, over 1500 detainees announced hunger-strikes in protests to the ongoing torture and ill-conditions of detainment centers and prisons in Bahrain. The current hunger strike in Bahrain is the biggest mass hunger-strike in recent history.

BAHRAIN: Types of Anti-Shiism



● Arrests of commemorators ● Travel Ban ● Detainment of activists ● Hunger Strike

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Saudi Arabia

September in Saudi Arabia has been especially dangerous as fresh waves of arrests have taken place. On the one hand, Shia in this nation continues to be prosecuted based on their religious expression. Government forces restrict religious practices by prohibiting congregation.

In correlation to the United Nations Human Rights Council dates, activists have been detained and imprisoned. Members of the Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), Abdulaziz al-Shubaily and Issa al-Hamid were arrested late September. Sources report their arrest linked to convictions as recently as early 2016, suggesting the recent arrests as a means of restricting the activists from engaging with activists presenting in the United Nations Human Rights Council in aims to shed light on anti-Shiism in the kingdom.

A 62-page report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) sheds light on the propagation of hate-crime of Saudi clerics. The report notes the labeling of Shia as “rejectionists” and “brothers of Satan,” as well as denouncing of systemic discrimination of this population. Lastly, HRW traces hate-crime by terror organization such that of al-Qaeda to the kingdoms propagation of hate.

Pakistan

Sources report negligence on the part of regional governments to meet a need for

the seasonal increase in activity. Shia Muslims feel their operations have been “impeded” by lack of procedural security measures and basic access to electricity and local management.

Cases of prosecution due to allegedly “blasphemous” social media posts continue in this nation. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom reports that 40 people are on life-sentences, some on death row, on charges of “blasphemy.” Trends of increased religious and ethnic minorities charged on the grounds of this law show that this law is used as a means of limiting expression and speech in the nation.

Targeting of minority groups by extremist groups continues to rise. Shia Rights Watch demands a re-evaluation of Pakistan’s anti-terror efforts as they are misdirected and ineffective.

Malaysia

Government forces arrested 200 Iraqi Shia residents for attending Muharram commemoration. All arrestees are university students in Kuala Lumpur. They were released after Iraqi government pressured and criticized Malaysian authorities. Historically Shia in Malaysia has been under pressure by the government as all Shia practices, publications and educational materials are banned in this country.

Afghanistan

An explosion in Kandahar kills six civilians on September 18. The nature of the crime point to Taliban insurgency. Another explosion killed 10 and wounded 16 on September 29th as Shia prepared for Ashura commemoration in Kabul.

Shia in Afghanistan continue to be treated as second-class citizens as prosecution for anti-Shia groups are yet to take place. Shia frequently reports a systemic discrimination in hate-crime cases.

Shia Rights Watch demands a report on Afghan government’s efforts to reduce anti-Shiism and targeting of religious minorities as they remain ineffective.

India

Shia in India report feeling limited as government resources promised to them has been delayed. SRW sources report feelings of anger as people feel cheated for state services, particularly as they have kept will meet all government requirements and have respected local laws.

Moharram processions are a multicultural and multi-religious activities in India.

Egypt

The Religious Endowment Ministry closed the tomb of Imam Hussein on Saturday, to prevent any Shia Muharram commemorations. This center has been subject to closure before by the authorities in the past. Information on Shia in Egypt and the nation's history of anti-Shiism can be found on ShiaRightsWatch.org

Conclusion

The month of September stood witness to at least 517 cases of anti-Shiism. Shia Muslims continue to live in fear as they are ostracized in their home nations, and arrests of Shia activists and scholars proceed in the Gulf states and the surrounding countries.

Violations are expected to increase in October and November as Shia Muslims participate in Muharram commemorations. Activists and humanitarians who are standing up to the injustice are facing the backlash from governments and other principal actors. Shia Rights Watch calls for governments across the region to increase protections for Shia and other religious minorities and to reverse and stop all ill-treatment of these populations.

Incidents of Anti-Shiism in May, 2017

May 2017 Monthly Analysis

There were more than 128 deaths and over 50 injuries in the month of May. This month has also witnessed the first incident of direct violence against Shia in the nation of Madagascar. Anti-Shiism remains an urgent issue that needs to be addressed by the international community.

This report will analyze a data of Shia deaths, injuries, and arrests in the month of May. Data was gathered via international news sources as well as on the ground Shia Rights Watch advocates. Authenticity and relevance of news were evaluated via corroborations from Shia Rights Watch advocates on the ground.

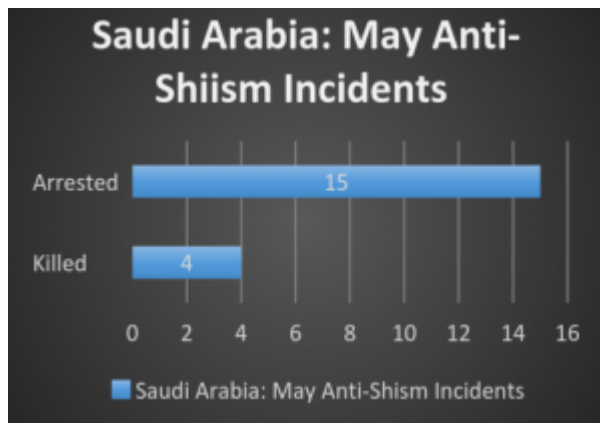
In the month of May, Shia rights have been violated in seven nations: Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Bahrain, and Madagascar. Incidents of vandalism and targeting of Shia have additionally occurred in Sweden, Philippines, and Syria. Violations include arrests, vandalism, deaths by unnatural means, and injuries. It is important to note that Shia rights violations listed in this report are a summary of incidents that have reached SRW. Violations are not limited to those in this report. More information can be found on ShiaRightsWatch.org.

Following the detainment of Shaikh Isa Qasim, sit-ins and protest continue in Diraz, Bahrain. Fear of social unrest has government forces limiting town members in resources as well as clashing with peaceful protesters. The ongoing struggle for recognition makes Bahrain a location of concern for Shia Rights Watch.

The Saudi siege on the town of Awamiya remains ongoing, making it a highlighted incident, as well. As Saudi forces maintain their siege on the Eastern province, resources such that of water, food and medical resources deplete, leaving the town in desperate need of international support.

Saudi Arabia

Early May, Saudi forces invaded the town of Awamiya beginning at 3 am. All entrances to the city were closed as forces began shooting at infrastructure. Sources report 400 houses and buildings have been demolished. With claims of renovation, the Saudi forces entered the Mosawara neighborhood with bulldozers, helicopters, and armored tanks. The Eastern province is historically home to Shia Saudi population. The area is rich in heritage centers and cultural landmarks. Despite the UN's warning against the demolition of historical sites in Awamiya, the Saudi government has made a point to remove the culture of "resistance," a memory of Shaikh Nimr al- Nimr, a leader in peaceful protest who was executed last year.



The death toll in Awamiya has risen to five. Over 14 people have been arrested. Those targeted and killed by forces are mainly youth within the community. Among those killed are Javad al- Dagher, a two-year-old along with his father.

On the 25th of May, 14 activists were sentenced to the death penalty due to their participation in the protests. Arrests were followed by psychological and physiological torture. Those prosecuted were denied access to lawyers. Names of defendants can be accessed on the Shia Rights website.

The siege has left the town without water and electricity. Restrictions on travel in to and out of town further limitations. One resident reports, "No one has been able to leave their houses to go to work, school or even get food as people are afraid to move" as a result of the numerous armored tanks and forces that roam the town.

Iraq

The death toll in Iraq rose with yet another attack in Karrada Iraq. On Memorial Day, the explosion of two bombs in busy areas of Karrada led to the death of 80. Over 50 were wounded in the incidents. The first of two bombs was detonated in an ice cream parlor in the commercial district. The second explosion was in the form of a car bomb on the al-Shahada Bridge, near the public pension's office during rush hour.

Karrada is not a new target for terrorist organizations. In July of 2016, a car bomb in Karrada left 324 dead and was considered the largest single incident in Iraq in the past decade. The reoccurrence of attacks points to a lack of security by officials. Despite initial promises, officials have not increased security measures in Karrada. The fact that the second explosion was near a government building, one may claim, is a sign of escalation and perhaps taunting of government by ISIS.

In total, 115 people were targeted for their Shia identity. The death toll consists mainly of women and children as attacks were centered in public areas such that of markets, neighborhoods and, in the case of Karrada, ice cream parlors. The setting of these attacks points to a targeting of Shia civilians by extremist groups.

Syria

Despite increased international attention on the case of unrest in Syria, targeting of Shia Muslims continue in this nation. The extent of anti-Shia sentiment within the Islamic state is publicized in an incident of anti-Shiism in Hama, Syria.

Fifty members of the Shia village were found dismembered in Hama- 24 of those killed were women and children. Coroner reports death by blunt force trauma to the head and dismemberment by blunt objects. Only a small number of bodies were retrieved as the state of the bodies left no room for recognition or recovery. The aggression behind the deaths point to deliberate targeting and hate towards the group.

Shia Rights Watch emphasizes the need for recognition in the state of the Shia minority in Syria.

Sweden

Imam Ali Mosque, the largest Shia mosque in Sweden was left in ruins after an arson attack. The exterior of the mosque was charred, sources report.

This incident of vandalism is not the first anti-Shia targeting in Sweden or Europe. In 2016, a mosque in Malmo, Sweden was vandalized and set on fire. While arrests were made, occurrence of hate-crime points to an increase in anti-shia sentiment in the nation.

Shia mosques are easy targets for anti-Shia propagators as they are open to the larger communities. However, the increase in targeting of Shia Muslims in the West calls for augmented recognition of the minority's status,

South East Asia: Philippines and Pakistan

The month of May witnessed an increase in incidents of Shia targeting in the nations of Pakistan and the Philipines. Sarfaraz Hussain along with his guard were killed as they patrolled their post in Kurram Pakistan by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi militants, mid-May. Hussain's death is yet another targeting of Shia officials in the nation of Pakistan, where a surge in the targeting of Shia members in high tiers of society has been seen in the past few years.

Philipines alone has had four deaths as a result of explosions. In the case of Nasser Abinal, a bomb was delivered to his office by a delivery man, killing his aid and injuring six others. Abinal was a government tax official in the city of Manila. In a separate incident, five Shia were killed and six others were wounded.

While city officials reject extremist involvement, the Philipines have seen an increase in militants pledging alliance with the Islamic State. Incidents of anti-Shiism in this nation point to a spread of anti-Shia sentiment in the region.

Bahrain

Anger at the sentencing of Shaikh Isa Qasim stirs unrest in the town of Diraz. Clashes between Bahraini forces and protestors has led to the death and arrest of tens of civilians.

After Sheikh Qasim's arrest, demonstrators assembled in sit-ins around the Sheikhs house. Protestors claim allegations against Sheikh Qasim are false and

just another way to target and limit the Shia of Bahrain. Since the uprising in 2011, many have been stripped of their citizenship- Sheikh Qasim was revoked of his citizenship in 2016.

In addition to direct violence, Bahrain’s government pressures dissent in many ways. Sources report that internet and phone lines were cut by government force, limiting those services to a few hours in the day. Further, pro-democracy activists living outside Bahrain report their family membered being harassed by officials. In a number of cases, family members were arrested with our due cause and forces to call activists and ask that they refrain from supporting democracy in or out of Bahrain.

Later this month, 17 were sentenced to imprisonment on grounds of involvement in dissent. Five were given life sentences, three were sentenced to a minimum of ten years in prison, while eight were revoked of citizenship. Discrimination against Shia Muslims in Bahrain extend post death as seen in attacks on commemorations held for Diraz martyrs. Sources report many bodies were not given to the deceased’s family and were buried in an unknown location

Fears of escalation exist within the region after increased arms availability to Saudi Arabia and its Gulf associates. The Bahraini First High Administrative court has ordered the liquidation of assets pertaining to the National Democratic Action Society and the dissolution of the party. Actions against political parties in Bahrain are a sign of political and economic regression.

| Killed | Arrested | Citizenship Revocations |
|---------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| 5 | 286 | 8 |

Madagascar

Armed assailants kidnap Yanish Ismail, a prominent member of the Shia community in Madagascar. The incident took place as Yanish was making his way home from a funeral when he was attacked by masked assailants. His whereabouts remain unknown.

Madagascar is the site of newfound increase in the targeting of Shia Muslims. While anti-Shiism has been limited to education, Ismail's disappearance is the reason for concern as it may be their watch list in fear of a possible escalation in trends of anti-Shiism.

Conclusions

In the month of May, anti-Shiism as a direct effect of international affairs was seen. New arms deal with Saudi Arabia instills fears of an escalation of direct violence in Gulf nations such that of Bahrain. In addition to the availability of weapons, the recent arms deal with the United States has projected a message that crime against humanity by Saudi Arabia will be regarded as insignificant by western democratic nations.

Incidents of anti-Shiism may be expected to rise in the month of Ramadan as ISIS leaders call for war on "unbelievers" on its supporters. A month of communal gathering, Muslims join in the month of Ramadhan, making this month a fertile time for mass targeting. Shia Rights Watch calls for increased security in Shia-populated areas and asks governments to be aware of the dangers that target their Shia constituents.