

Incidents of Anti-Shiism in March, 2018

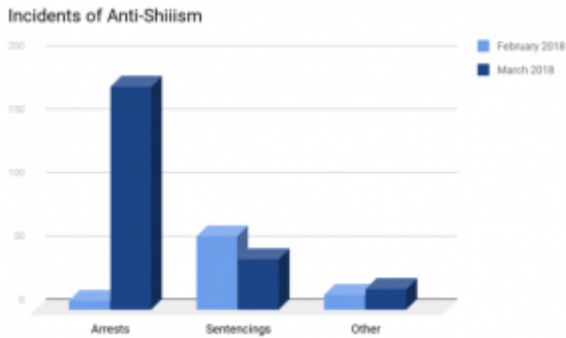
Incidents of Anti-Shiism in March 2018

February's lower turnout of anti-Shiism did not last long, as March totaled an additional 113 incidents of anti-Shiism to last month's 359, amounting to 472. The spike in occurrences can be attributed mainly to a mass number of arrests in Bahrain and a sharp increase in Shia casualties in Afghanistan due to a rise of extremist cells in the country. The month of March resulted in 60 deaths and 154 injuries, averaging 7 people critically injured or murdered every day this month. 197 Shia Muslims were arbitrarily arrested this month, and 40 people were sentenced to prison on the basis of fabricated allegations, averaging 8 incarcerations each day as well. 19 other anti-Shia related incidents occurred this month including but not limited to, vandalization of mosques, attacks on freedom of speech and expression, prison punishment, coerced confessions, and denial of citizenship or nationality. Overall, the number of anti-Shia incidents averaged around 15 every day, shedding light on the severity of the wrongful persecution with which the Shia population is burdened.

Bahrain

This month in Bahrain, the Shia population saw more than two times the amount of anti-Shiism than it experienced last month in February. Bahrain saw a total of 234 anti-Shia incidents this month, more than 3 times that of February. With an astounding spike of 176 arbitrary arrests, 40 unlawful prison sentencings and a number of reported cases of prisoner abuse and attempts by the regime to thwart freedom of speech and expression, Bahrain's Shia population was directly faced with a stark reality that their hopes of living freely without discrimination remain

not quite yet in reach.



March began with the sentencing of 2 individuals on false allegations of traveling to Iran and receiving training from Iran's Revolutionary Guard. Each were sentenced to 7 years in prison, and their Bahraini citizenship was stripped, adding to the issue of Shia statelessness so prominent in Bahrain due to the Regime's efforts to retain power through a corrupt political system. Iran denied the allegations and claimed that they were fabricated.

A day later, 116 Bahraini Shia was arrested on the same false accusations of terrorism and traveling to Iran to receive training from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, however, sentences have yet to be imposed.

March 7th saw the sentencing of 17 more Bahraini Shia in 3 separate cases of unfounded terrorism charges, revoking the citizenship of 14 and leaving them stateless. Of the 17, 1 was given the death penalty, 9 were sentenced to life imprisonment, 5 were handed 15 year sentences, 1 was given 10 years, and another faces 6 months in prison on the charge of "illegal gathering", a punishable crime that the government of Bahrain uses to prohibit its Shia population from participating in both religious gatherings and protests against the injustices they face.

Within a week, 10 more Bahraini citizens had been sentenced to prison on similarly groundless allegations of terrorism. 6 of them are facing life imprisonment, and 4 are facing 3 years each.

On March 22nd, Bahraini security forces dressed in civilian clothes raided 18 homes in Diraz, vandalizing and looting the houses before arresting a total of 10 people. Those who were taken into custody are Hussein Mohammed Saleh, Sayed Ahmed Sayed Majid, Hassan Mulla Ali Jassem, Mohammed Fadel Abdul Rahim, Hassan Abdul Khaleq Jassim, Hassan Isa Al Fatlawi and Qasim Aqeel Fadl, and

notably Ali Abdullah Qassim, the son-in-law of top Shia cleric Sheikh Isa Qassim, who has been under de-facto house arrest since the revocation of his citizenship in June 2016.

A day later, in the 24 hours between March 23rd and 24th, 32 more Bahraini Shia were arrested in separate raids carried out by security forces. Two raids took place in Diraz, detaining 17 and 15 people respectively, and 1 raid occurred in the Northern village of Buri that involved the looting of a house, before ultimately arresting two brothers, Abdullah and Mohammed Saleh Mahdi. The raids took place without any police warrants, and the 32 Shia Muslims were detained without any charges being brought upon them.

In the early hours of March 26th, security forces raided dozens of homes in the villages of Diraz, al-Daih, al-Musalla, and Jidhafs, forcibly kidnapping 17 citizens and transporting them to an unknown location, where it is feared that they will be tortured into false confessions; a practice routinely carried out by the government. Of those kidnapped are: Ahmad Saleh, Yousif Saleh, Jaafar Hani, Hussein Hani, Mohammad Shaker, Amjad Abdullah, Sultan Isa, Hussein Al-Khair, Montazar Al-Khair, Sayed Mohammad Sayed Hussein, Ali Bader Al-Jaziri, and Rouh Alla Abduzahraa, Hussein Mushaima, Ali Al-Shamloul, Abdullah Jaafar Al-Samoum, Ahmad Samir ,and Rida Mohammad Ali Zainuldeen.

Two days later, 9 more Bahraini citizens were sentenced to prison on fabricated charges of terrorism. 8 men received 7 years in prison each, and one minor was sentenced to 3 years in prison. On the same day, award-winning photojournalist Sayed Ahmed Al-Mousawi had his 10-year sentence upheld, and his citizenship revoked. Mousawi was arrested in 2014 after documenting a series of protests that year, and convicted in 2015 on terrorism charges.

In a report published on March 29th, a 15-year-old arrested by the Bahraini regime came forward to say that he had been tortured and forced into signing a confession that said he was guilty of arson, although he was not. This exemplifies the illegitimacy of Bahrain's criminal charges and allegations brought upon its Shia citizens, as when evidence is lacking, a coerced confession allows a trial and sentencing.

The Bahraini Regime continues to arbitrarily arrest its Shia citizens under the claim of 'national security', without any reasonable evidence to back the

allegations they claim. The false allegations and charges of ties to Iran due to its majority Shia population are unfounded and exemplify the corruption and discrimination against the Shia population in the country as institutionalized anti-Shia issues that affect the everyday lives of Bahrain's majority population.

In a continuation of Bahrain's effort to decrease the majority of Shia citizens in the country and strip their rights to fair trial, medical attention, education, employment, and housing, Bahraini officials have refused to grant citizenship to the daughter of a prominent Shia leader and activist, Sheikh Ali Salman, even though she has all of the necessary legal documentation. Her father has been serving a 9-year prison sentence since 2014 after being arrested on charges of "insulting government officials" and "inciting unrest" after peacefully protesting for government reform.

On March 9th, Shia citizens in the northern villages of Abu Saiba and Shakhora, which are west of the capital city of Manama, took to the streets to protest, calling for government reform and a political system that represents all Bahrainis, including Shia. The protests did not end there, however, as even behind bars in a Bahraini prison, 49 year old Hajer Mansoor, who was sentenced alongside her 18-month old son last October both on terrorism charges, began her second hunger strike to protest against the treatment of prisoners in Bahrain, and was admitted to the hospital on March 9th.

Her protests are not unfounded, as this month, Issa al-Mutawa, a prisoner in Bahrain's Jaw prison is being punished for his decision to observe a Shia religious occasion last month. He is, for the next two months, prohibited from purchasing any basic goods or necessities that are provided at the detention facility, which will impact his health and well being in the already unsanitary conditions.

Shortly after a Twitter campaign by activists demanding his immediate release, blind Bahraini prisoner Jaafar Maatouk was moved to solitary confinement. Maatouk is currently serving a life sentence on politically motivated charges and was stripped of his citizenship in 2014. In the days following, the Interior Minister of Bahrain stated that he was looking into a new law that would "deal with unprecedented chaos by disruptive social media accounts", essentially threatening to punish online activists for exercising their freedom of speech.

Bahrain's Shia population continues to suffer under the backlash of oppressive

Regime force. The astounding number of Shia citizens arbitrarily arrested every day, and the lack of fair trial for their population makes living in the Gulf country a nightmare for Shia Muslims, and does not take the weight off of living elsewhere, as the regime continually strips the citizenship of those traveling outside of Bahrain's borders so that they are unable to return.

Bahrain's human rights situation is in need of immediate attention as the government's daily offenses against the majority of its civilian population need to end.

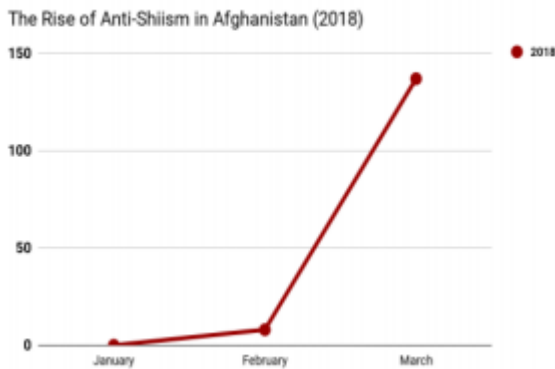
Afghanistan

Afghanistan saw its first sharp rise in anti-Shiism this year with an increase in the targeting of Shia mosques and neighborhoods. The rising presence of radical extremism in Afghanistan can be held accountable for the increase in attacks against the Shia population in the country. This month, Afghanistan saw 41 deaths and 96 injuries among the casualties of targeted attacks against Shia Muslims.

On March 10th, a bomb was placed and detonated outside of a Shia mosque in Kabul, as civilians of the Shia faith had gathered in remembrance of Abdul Ali Mazari, an ethnic Hazara political leader who was killed by the Taliban in 1995. The blast took a total of 9 lives and left 18 others critically injured.

Just over a week later, 5 Shia university students were critically injured by a grenade blast in their Shia-dominated neighborhood. The attacker disguised himself by wearing a school uniform into the academic campus, and detonated the grenade on a suicide mission, with the goal of killing the Shia students that he targeted. While no group claimed responsibility for the attack, the takfiri motives resemble that of a number of extremist groups that continually target the

minority Shia population because of their beliefs.



On March 22nd, terrorists affiliated with Daesh detonated a bomb outside of a Shia shrine in the Karte Sakhi area of Kabul, where a large number of civilians were gathered to celebrate Nowruz, the start of the Persian New Year. The blast, clearly targeting the Shia population, took the lives of 31 people and injured an additional 65.

Three days after this bombing, another targeted suicide attack killed 1 person and critically injured another 8. The bombing took place outside of a Shia place of worship, similarly to the tactics of most anti-Shia attacks this month. Two suicide bombers attempted to enter the mosque but were met by security forces. One of the bombers was killed before he could detonate his device, but the other detonated his causing the civilian casualties.

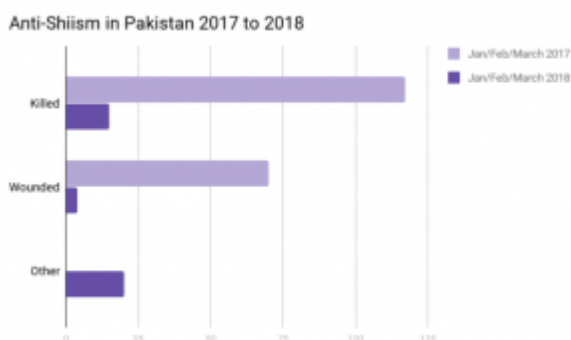
The Shia population in Afghanistan faces persecution from extremist groups who take refuge there due to the political instability of the country. Groups such as ISIS regularly attack Shia population because of their religious belief. The death and injury toll among Shia Muslims was much higher this month than the first two months of this year, and it is important to note that the high number of casualties resulted from just 4 events, targeted at places of worship and schools. The number of events and the locations they take place are a clear indication of anti-Shiism in that the groups that carry out these attacks are not only obviously targeting the Shia population, but also targeting the Shia population in mass numbers, with a purpose to kill indiscriminately. These events are not isolated but are the end-product of a string of radical ideologies across the country that look down upon the Shia population and seek to abolish them.

Pakistan

Pakistan's Shia Muslims, similarly to Afghanistan's, face the constant threat of

terrorist attacks, and a lack of serious government intervention to stop extremist groups from acting on their anti-Shia sentiments, which allows for radical ideologies to flourish. The ASWJ (Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama) terrorist group is responsible for the majority of attacks against Pakistani Shia. The first three months of 2018 have shown to be much calmer in Pakistan than the same time period last year, however, the continued targeting of Shia Muslims whether in mass numbers or minute, exemplifies that the anti-Shia sentiments are still present in the minds of many. This month, the ASWJ group killed 4 Shia civilians, injured 3, and brought 20 others upon fabricated blasphemy charges through a connection to Pakistan's JUI (Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam), a religious and political party.

In the first week of the month, there were 3 separate targeted attacks on Shia Muslims. The first, which took place in Kohat, resulted in the death of a primary school headmaster. The attacker was not identified as he fled the scene immediately. The following two shootings occurred in Quetta, and resulted in the death of a Shia Muslim youth, Sajid Ali, and a policeman protecting fruit sellers of the Shia Hazara community. Another policeman was also injured in the attack.



A fourth shooting took place in Karachi on March 22nd, taking the life of Ameer Ali as he was driving in his car near Memon Hospital. Members of the ASWJ group open fire into his car killing him immediately and injuring two-year-old Ali Asghar, son of Ali Imran, and 30-year old Ali Raza, who were passengers at the time.

On March 17th, terrorists from the aforementioned ASWJ group made their way into a Husseinayah (an Islamic center) in Dera Ismail Khan, and ransacked the place of worship before destroying and defacing the holy symbols of Shia Islam. This attack reminds us that although most attacks in Pakistan are individual shootings, the ideology behind the action involves a deeper level of anti-Shia

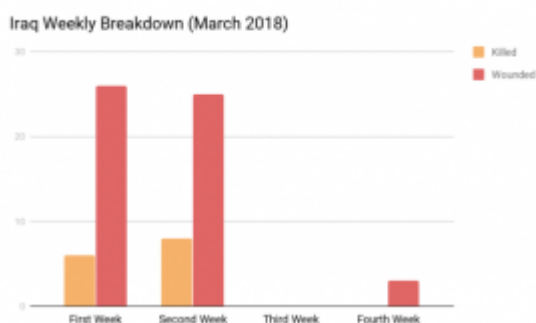
sentiment, and brings to light that the targets are not random civilians, but specifically Shia Muslims.

This is further exemplified 3 days later, when Abdullah Sindhi, a member of the ASWJ terrorist group, used his connections within the JUI to bring a case of blasphemy upon 20 Shia Muslims who were chanting religious slogans praising their Imam in Sind, Pakistan. The case was brought up in an attempt to defame Shia Islam and to regard those who follow it as blasphemous and punishable by law, in an attempt to make the religious discrimination in Pakistan political, rather than just extremist.

The issue of terrorism is prominent in Pakistan and must be addressed, as not only are the killings of Shia Muslims wreaking havoc on the daily lives and security of those living in the country, but it is beginning to infiltrate into the political system as exemplified through the blasphemy case. If the ideologies of these extremist groups are able to gather momentum and influence in the politics of Pakistan, the continual abuse of Shia Muslims could become institutionalized and systematic, which would escalate and justify violence, and deteriorate the standard of living for Shia Muslims in the country.

Iraq

Iraq faced another month of turmoil in March with the continuation of ruthless bombings by what is assumed to be the takfiri tactics of Daesh. The country saw a total of 20 violent incidents this month, the majority of which came in the form of roadside bombings. Iraqi Shia lives through the threat every day of being targeted by extremist groups, as most days entail multiple different bombings from the time of sunrise to sunset. In March, a total of 14 Shia Muslims were killed, and an additional 60 were wounded due to targeted attacks on followers of Shia Islam.



On the first day of the month, a total of 2 people were killed and 4 people were

wounded in two separate attacks. The first event took place outside of a popular Baghdad market, at which an explosive device was detonated killing 1 and injuring 4. The second attack on March 1st occurred in Baghdad as well and killed 1 man when a sticky explosive device placed under the wheel of his car was detonated.

No less than 24 hours later, another roadside bomb exploded west of Baghdad, killing 1 and critically injuring 2 others. This attack was followed closely by another on March 3rd, where the bodies of two Shia men were found in the southeast of Baghdad. In a turn away from the typical method of bombing bringing terror to Iraqi Shia, these two men were deemed to have gunshot and stabbing wounds, suggesting that the aggressor was physically attacking them at the time of their deaths.

March 4th and 5th brought 7 more people to the hospital with critical injuries from three separate bombing attacks in the east and south of Baghdad. 2 people were injured by a roadside bomb, and the other 5 were injured by explosive devices at popular markets in the city.

The 6th through the 8th of the month injured a total of 13 Shia, and killed 1. All of these casualties were the result of explosive devices detonated in the typical Daesh areas such as on a roadside or at a popular market in or around Baghdad. The first week of March alone saw a total of 26 injuries and 6 deaths among the Shia population, averaging 4 casualties each day. The ability for takfiri groups in Iraq to continually target the Shia population needs to be put to an end, and Shia Rights Watch condemns the continual allowance of targeted attacks against Shia Muslims in Iraq.

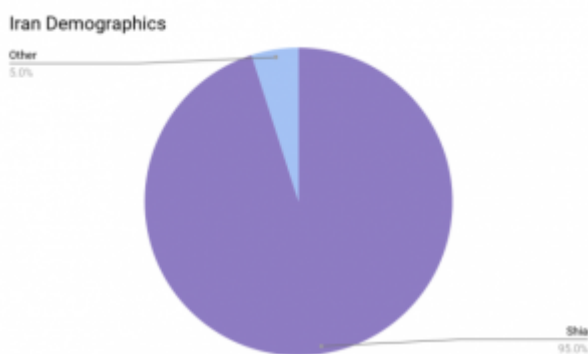
The attacks did not stop there, however, as the next 5 days brought more chaos with the death of 8 more civilians and the injury of 25. The majority of these attacks were a string of roadside bombings in and around Baghdad, killing a total of 5 and wounding 24. 3 deaths came as a result of a shooting, in which a member of Daesh broke into a home and shot and killed a doctor and two women. In a separate event, 1 person was injured when extremists threw a grenade into a cafe as they drove by on motorcycles.

Lastly, on March 26th, 3 more civilians were injured when an explosive device was detonated in their Baghdad neighborhood.

The Shia population in Iraq is constantly terrorized by the animosity of extremist groups that seek to abolish people that follow Shia Islam as it differs from their own beliefs. Religious tolerance must be discussed openly and implemented through legal means in order to work towards ending the chaos in Iraq and put an end to the abuse that extremist groups exercise.

Iran

Iran, although a Shia majority country, Many Shia scholars, and activist are under pressure. Historically the government of Iran does not tolerate political critiques or calls for reform, therefore, although one may be Shia, openly sharing views and perspectives that go against government policies or actions can lead to persecution in the country and did this month.



Early on March 6th, Ayatollah Sayed Hussain al-Shirazi, prominent Shia cleric and Executive Director of the Shirazi Foundation, was stopped by Iranian security forces on his way home from his morning lectures with his father, Grand Ayatollah Shirazi. He was forcibly pulled out of his car and thrown to the ground, where the security forces removed his turban, degrading him in public. He was then detained and transported to an undisclosed location.

The act is a continuation of previous years' crackdowns on relatives and supporters of the Grand Ayatollah Shirazi, whose organization is both non-political and non-profit, and works to promote the social welfare of Muslims and all people through education, research, think tanks, and media. The foundation also acts as a link to inquiries about the Shia faith and Islamic Law.

The organization and its affiliates are under constant pressure by the Iranian government, due to their non-government affiliated critiques of Iran's

governance, and Iran attempts to repress their freedom of speech and freedom of expression through arbitrary arrests and use of force against the supporters and family members of Grand Ayatollah Shirazi.

This event brings concerns of an emergence of anti-Shiism in Iran, which regards itself as an Islamic republic, as those who express their religious views and critique how the Islamic republic should operate based off of the same religious views it was founded upon are punished by arrest and imprisonment. Iran must allow its citizens the freedom of expression to speak openly about both their religious views and their political views, otherwise, they are denying a fundamental right to their Shia people; a right that they condemn other countries for taking away from the same population.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a repeat oppressor of Shia Muslims, as the very school of religious thought that their kingdom is founded upon disagrees with the belief system that Shia Islam follows. While much of the abuse in Saudi Arabia goes unreported by the government, it is known that often Saudi Shia are convicted on false allegations of “blasphemy” and “terrorism” for exercising their religious freedoms, and imprisoned with harsh sentences including, but not limited to, death.

Two men from Saudi Arabia’s Shia-majority Eastern province were each sentenced to 20 years in prison in Saudi Arabia this month. They were convicted on the fabricated allegations of having ties to Iran, a common theme in the oppression of Shia Muslims, and for intent to create political unrest and disrupt the unity of Saudi Arabia. These charges act as a facade to the systematic repression and discrimination against Shia people in the country.

While death may be the harshest punishment, the prisoners in Saudi Arabia also suffer incessant torture and abuses in prison, which resulted in two casualties this month. One prisoner, Ahmed Attia was tortured so brutally in Saudi prisons after being deported from Bahrain that he lost his memory entirely, and another prisoner, 61-year-old Haj Ali Jassim Nazia, was tortured to death in Saudi Arabian prison on March 13th.

The brutal force used by the Saudi regime to eradicate religious freedom from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a breeding ground for extremist sentiment and fosters

the very thoughts that spread around the world and lead to the widespread abuses against the Shia population.

Conclusion

The month of March saw over 100 more incidents of anti-Shiism than the month of February, making a statement in numbers and in lost loved ones that the Shia population is continuing to face a multitude of abuses around the world. From extremist groups bombing masses of people, to targeted shootings, to systematic oppression through government policy and military force, the Shia population fears for their lives and families every day, and action is taken by governments and the international community to put a stop the ruthless repression. Shia Muslims deserve to be treated with dignity rather than as second-class citizens, and their assailants, whether they be extremists or government officials, must be brought to justice.

A Brief Look at the Shia Muslims in 2017

Shia Muslims are the most significant minority group in the world. Although they make up half of the worlds Muslim population, Shia Muslims remain targets of human rights violations. Cases of Anti-Shiism are widespread and extensive. Over the past year, Shia Rights Watch declared 6,388 incidents in which Shia Muslims have been killed, injured, arrested, or harassed solely by their religious association. The number above is only in a handful of nations in which Shia Muslims make up a significant portion of the population and feel courageous enough to broadcast their human rights violations. Such countries are inclusive, but not limited to Pakistan, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Malaysia. Anti-Shiism in each country is unique. In countries such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, the government limits its Shia constituents while in countries such as Iraq, terror organizations independently target Shia Muslims. In Asian countries such as

Malaysia and Pakistan, terror organizations are the primary source of direct violence. However, the lack of protection for Shia Muslims and the prosecution of anti-Shia agents has created a void by which extremist organizations can further their anti-Shia actions.

In both nations in which terror organizations are active, and in those by which the government limits its Shia Muslim constituents, security is a significant issue. Frequently, Shia Muslim entities report a lack of security for their communities. In March of 2017, 3,000 Shia Muslims protested the lack of government protection. Men, women, and children sat at the Taftan border for a week, demanding security for the 25 buses carrying Shia pilgrims traveling back from Iran. The protests came after some attacks targeting buses moving Shia Muslims killed tens of civilians. The travelers stated they feel “unsafe” in their nation.

In a separate incident, Shia mourners reported a lack of security after complying with the state organized schedule of ritual processions in Moharram. Government leaders had allocated specific areas for Moharram mourning rituals, claiming aims of city organization. Later in the month, numerous groups reported harassment and violations by anti-Shia groups. Due to a lacking in communication lines, Shia Muslims state they could not contact and warn their fellow mourners at other locations. Local sources reported that they felt “vulnerable and susceptible” because the new organization of mourning processions did not take into account the anti-Shia sentiment in neighboring areas. Further, locals report a lack of trust towards the local officials as the rate of arrest and prosecution of anti-Shia agents are extremely low.

The trend of perceived lack of justice and mistrust is not unique to Pakistan. In Gulf nations such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, Shia Muslims also feel that they are treated as “others” in their home nations. Many feel they are denied due process granted to their non-Shia counterparts. For example, in late 2016, the Bahraini government ratified a law that would allow for civilians to be tried in military court- thus far, those who have been tried in military court have been of the Shia faith. In Saudi Arabia, students and workers report they are denied access to the same education and work opportunities that their non-Shia counterparts have. Numerous humanitarian reports note the stark developmental differences between Shia populated areas such as Awamiyah, in comparison to non-Shia populated areas, despite the fact that the Eastern Province is the oil-rich region of the Kingdom.

A history of perceived lack of justice has created mistrust among Shia Muslims and their nations. Having been left alone to defend their populations, some Shia Muslims feel as though they are not regarded as members of their geopolitical community.

Perceptions of violence and anti-Shia sentiment is, by the fact, independent from the universal yearning for peace and safety. The frequency of violence in the Middle East affects everyone. The regularity of violence reduces tourism, and the instability diminishes foreign investments in the region. Thus, peace is benefits all walks of life.

Peace in the Middle-East

To create stability in the Middle East, security measures to protect Shia Muslims must be put into place. To do so, both the Shia populace and government officials (local and national) must work in unison. First, the unity of command must be created by these two groups.

Trust is a cornerstone of any social construct. For people to act, they must first trust that said action is to their benefit, at least it won't endanger them. Security measures are no different. Everyone wants ultimate stability. It's just a matter of how the balance will be achieved. Fact is, balance cannot be made by enforcement of the government alone. Take Bahrain as an example. By allowing civilians to be tried in military court, the Bahraini government aimed to reduce insurgency involvement. Saudi Arabia also sought to minimize anti-government action by using military action against the residence of Awamiyah. As seen by the increased humanitarian outrage on both Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, the government's efforts did everything except stabilize the Gulf region. In these two nations, the government failed to take into account citizens of the country. Their concerns were completely undermined. The anti-Shia sentiment of government action in turn fuels anti-government protest creating a cycle of violence. The current level of violence in the Gulf region is destructive to all facets of society. Not only has the number of international business ventures in Bahrain decreased, but numerous studies have also shown a reduction in the nations education rate when compared to non-conflicting Gulf nations.

Upon investigation, it becomes clear that upholding national identity is a prominent goal of their actions. Thus, patriotism should be a cornerstone in

joining government officials and protestors together. A developmental plan to redefine means of improving the global standing of Bahrain can be used to drive a unified command to build stability in the nation. With the unity of leadership is a unity of enforcement, by which, both parties can carry out legislative changes in their circles of influence.

Suggestions:

A transparent map of co-evolution of parties at power (national and grassroots) through space and time are needed to ensure trust, confidence, and activity between the parties and onlookers. While coevolution of power is not always tangible, the dynamic nature of power can be traced, at the very least in comparison to the point of departure. The mapping must define party participants, their values, objectives, and their roles.

Within the dialogue process, validation must be made for the others perceived hardships. Keep in mind; conflict is defined by perceived divergence of needs or goals, not necessarily an “actual” divergence of interests. Validation is a form of power, and when communicated diligently it can be in the hands of the giver. By recognizing hardships each is enduring, the struggle to “prove an upper hand” diminishes and parties can move on to building a resolution.

To reduce damages of anti-Shiism, parties must focus on the overarching damages created as a result of violence. Recognizing that pro-Shia and anti-Shia agents both act with a perceived goal of advancing the state, national economics and wellbeing must be a cornerstone of pro-peace plans.

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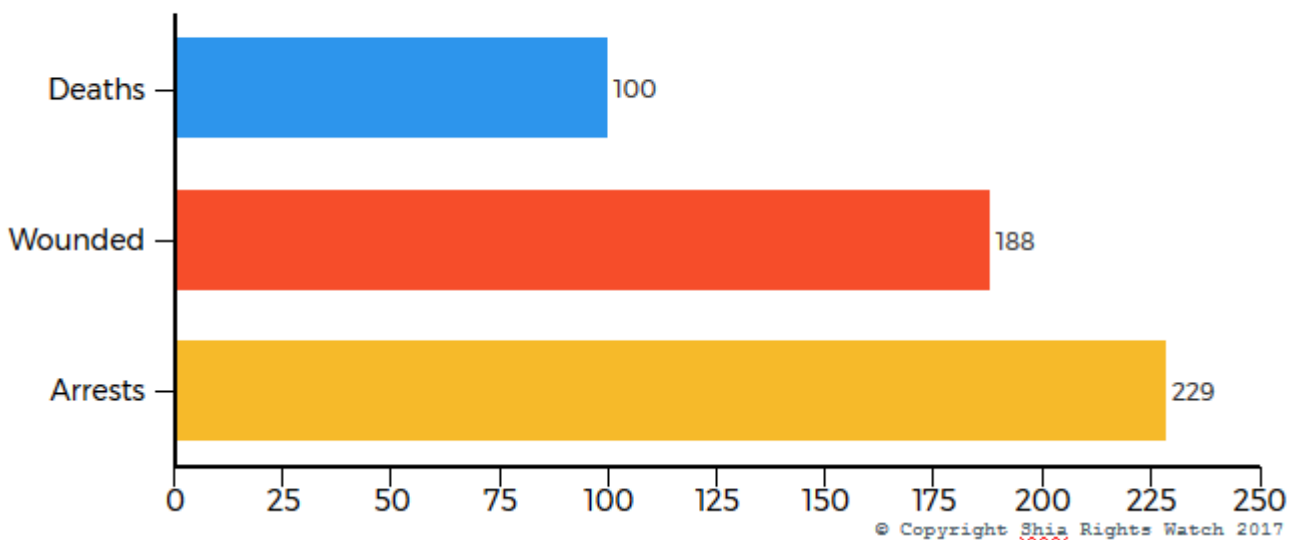
September Monthly Analysis

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

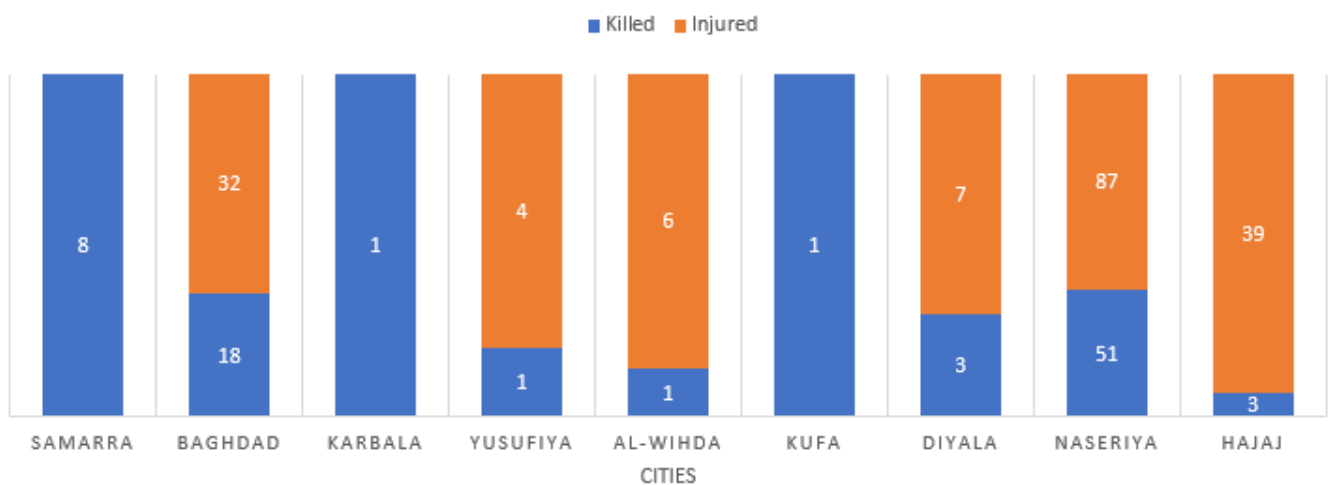
Trends in anti-Shiism have been perpetrated by ISIS extremists. However, in addition to targeting Shia populated areas, incidents in September display a shift in targets. Twin blasts in Hajaj, Salahedin province, targeted a restaurant frequented by Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), a prominently Shia 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.

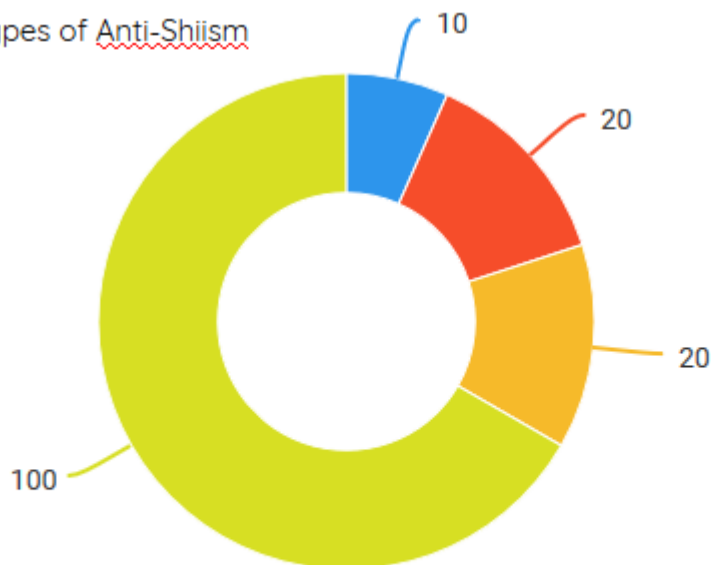
In the town of Diraz, in addition to tearing down commemoration signs, forces stopped commemorators from attending Imam al- Sadiq mosque. It must be mentioned that Shia in Diraz remains banned from holding Friday prayers.

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.

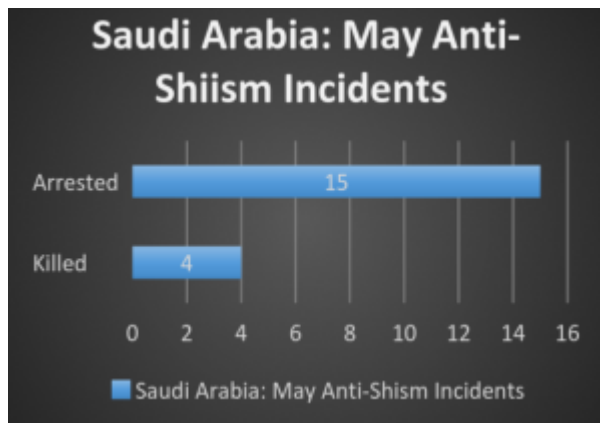
In the month of May, Shia rights have been violated in seven nations: Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Bahrain, and Madagascar. Incidents of vandalism and targeting of Shia have additionally occurred in Sweden, Philippines, and Syria. Violations include arrests, vandalism, deaths by unnatural means, and injuries. 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.