

Terror Attacks Shake US-Backed Baghdad Regime

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Multiple car-bomb explosions killed some 125 and injured 150 in Baghdad Saturday. Online media sites linked to Islamic State in Iraq and Syria claimed responsibility for the attacks, claiming they were directed against Shi'ites, regarded as apostates by the reactionary Sunni fundamentalist group.

The bombing, the latest in a string of major terror attacks, struck in the middle class neighborhood of Karrada, home to Shi'ites, Sunnis and many others. The bombs detonated just after midnight local time, when the streets were crowded with families breaking their daytime Ramadan fast. At least 25 of the dead were children.

The horrific atrocity comes on the heels of similar terrorist attacks in Istanbul, Bangladesh and Kabul, and an earlier attack in Baghdad by a knife-wielding assailant.

In a statement Sunday, the Obama administration vowed that the attacks “will only strengthen US resolve to support Iraqi security forces.”

“The United States strongly condemns ISIS’s heinous terrorist attacks in Baghdad,” a US National Security Council statement said. The NSC said that the administration would “intensify our efforts to root out ISIS’s terrorist network and leaders.”

The attack comes amid a general escalation of military operations against ISIS in Iraq, encompassing both Iraqi forces and the renewed American military intervention, launched by the Obama administration in the summer of 2014. Obama sent in US forces, three years after they were withdrawn, in response to the threatened destabilization of the US-backed government in Baghdad by the seizure of large areas of western and northern Iraq by Sunni insurgents.

Fresh from proclamations of victory over ISIS and “liberation” in Fallujah, the government of Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al Abadi is preparing for another offensive, against the northern city of Mosul, which is projected to last for months and displace at least 500,000 people. The bombing of Baghdad neighborhoods, just days after Abadi’s victory tour through Fallujah, is a humiliating blow to a government already in political turmoil.

Abadi visited the Karrada neighborhood on Sunday morning in a public display of sympathy that aroused anger from the bereaved population. Crowds gathered to denounce the prime minister as a “thief” and a “dog,” and security forces had to escort him from the area.

Sunday’s bombing is only the latest manifestation of the growing breakdown of the neocolonial government installed in power in Baghdad by the 2003 US invasion. The centralized nation-state structure of Iraq is a hollow shell, with most of the country

controlled by ethnically-rooted factions. The sectarian tensions inflamed and manipulated by Washington for years are engulfing Iraq in a deepening civil war that threatens the very existence of the US-backed regime.

The intensification of the sectarian conflicts are fueling regional power struggles and threatening wider war in the Middle East. Shia militiamen with ties to the Iranian government have come into conflict with Iraqi security forces during the Fallujah campaign, prompting demands from Sunni leaders that all Shia formations be excluded from the Mosul offensive. Saudi representatives denounced Iran last week for “destabilizing the Middle East,” citing Tehran’s backing for Shi’ite militias accused of atrocities, prompting denunciations from Baghdad, which claimed interference by Riyadh in Iraqi affairs.

Since 2014, two years of renewed US war in Iraq, waged under the fraudulent banner of the “war on terrorism” and “war against ISIS,” have only deepened the sectarian chaos. Baghdad itself is currently under military-police lockdown, a measure taken as much out of fear of the population as of terror attacks.

The Abadi government faces a spiraling political crisis. The government’s assault on Fallujah has inflamed Sunni-Shia tensions amid reports of massacres by sectarian militias on both sides, and Abadi’s political reforms, aimed at tamping down sectarian divisions within the Baghdad government, have been blocked by political opponents in Iraq’s judiciary. The Iraqi prime minister was met with jeers and stone throwing during a visit to the bombing site on Sunday.

Washington is preparing to prop up its client in Baghdad and reassert its dominance over the country with further deployments of US troops. American General Sean MacFarland said last week that he will deploy at least 400 additional troops in Iraq this fall, with or without presidential approval. The Pentagon is pressuring the Obama administration to authorize still more deployments before the end of 2016.

US military forces are being committed to an open-ended and continuously growing war in Iraq. American troop levels in Iraq are already well over the official “cap” avowed by the White House, with the officially acknowledged total at well over 5,000. Thousands of American soldiers and Marines, armed with heavy weaponry including artillery, tanks and Apache helicopters, are laying the framework for large-scale ground war in Iraq.

The Obama administration and Democratic Party establishment are, for political reasons, inclined to delay and downplay the escalation in Iraq until after the November elections, in an effort to disassociate themselves from wars that are hated by broad sections of the US population. At the same time, they are authorizing the Pentagon to create conditions in which further escalations in Iraq, Syria, and globally can be carried out next year, once the political hurdle of the election has passed.

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