

# [***Iraq Witnesses Worst Violence In Years As Shia Cleric Steps Down Here s What You Need To Know***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:668S-9XG1-JBCM-F2KN-00000-00&context=1516831)

Forbes.com

August 30, 2022 Tuesday

Copyright 2022 Forbes LLC All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 746 words

**Byline:** Siladitya Ray, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:** The violent clashes between Iraqi government forces and supporters of influential Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr erupted this week after Sadr announced his exit from active ***politics***.

**Body**

**Topline**

At least 23 people were killed in Baghdad and the city s heavily secured Green Zone which houses key government buildings and foreign embassies was struck by rocket fire on Tuesday as Iraq faces some of the worst violence it has seen in several years after influential Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr announced his retirement from ***politics***.

<figure>

<figcaption>

An armed member of Saraya al-Salam (Peace Brigade), the military wing affiliated with Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, takes aim during clashes with Iraqi security forces in Baghdad's Green Zone.

AFP via Getty Images

</figcaption></figure>

**Key Facts**

Protestors loyal to Sadr clashed with Iraqi security forces as many of them stormed into the Republican Palace which is currently used by the Iraqi government and, previously, as the residence of former dictator Saddam Hussein.

According toAFP, at least 23 supporters of Sadr have been shot dead by security forces while around 380 others remain injured.

Militia members carrying assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades in pickup trucks were seen across the Iraqi capital as several rockets were fired into Baghdad s Green Zone on Tuesday, Reutersreported.

The clashes have prompted neighboring Iran whose influence over Iraqi ***politics*** has been opposed by Sadr and his supporters to close its land borders with Iraq while flights into the country have been canceled.

**Key Background**

The political situation in Iraq has been thrown into turmoil since last year s general elections after a Sadr-backed faction won the most seats in Iraq s parliament. Sadr and his allies have refused to engage with other Shia groups in the parliament backed by Iran, delaying the formation of a new government in the country. Tehran is an influential playerin Iraq s national ***politics*** and it backs a bloc of political parties led by former prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki a rival of Sadr. Sadr-loyalists fear that his exit from active ***politics*** could allow Iran-backed leaders to seize power in a new ruling coalition. Aside from political parties, Iran also exerts influence over several Iraqi paramilitaries who are part of the country s security forces but not directly controlled by the government in Baghdad, the**New York Times**reports. Iraq s caretaker Prime Minister an ally of Sadr has decried the violence and also imposed a nationwide curfew. Sadr himself has demanded an end to all violence across the country and said he will go on a hunger strike until this happens.

**Crucial Quote**

In astatementissued on Monday, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad which is located inside the Green Zone said: The United States is concerned about escalating tensions and urges all parties to remain peaceful and refrain from acts that could lead to a cycle of violence...Now is the time for dialogue to resolve differences, not through confrontation. White House officials echoed this but indicated there wasn t an immediate need to evacuate embassy staff from Baghdad.

**Surprising Fact**

Amid the clashes, several of Sadr s supporters managed to enter the premises of the Republican Palace. In a repeat of scenes witnessed in Sri Lankaearlier this year, many of them were picturedjumping into the swimming poollocated inside the palace compound while others walked around the lavish building.

**What To Watch For**

Among members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Iraq is the second largest producer of oil and violence in the country could result in disrupted supply. In July, Iraqproduced4.496 million barrels per day and a major drop in that number could send global crude oil prices soaring further.According toReuters, there has been no disruption in oil exports from Iraq as of Tuesday, but Sadr s supporters have surrounded a refinery in Basrah, which produces 210,000 barrels per day. Despite this, the global benchmark Brent Crude Oil Futures Index is down more than 2.4% on Tuesday morning amid fears of an oncoming recession.

**Tangent**

A series of what appears to be unrelated rocket attacks on a gas field in northern Iraq s Kurdish region forced U.S. workers to leave the area, causing another disruption in the country s energy sector, Reutersreported. The most recent rocket strikes on the gasfield took place last week, forcing several American workers from the Texas-based Exterran Corp to leave the region.

**Further Reading**

Fighting in Iraqi capital leaves 23 dead after Sadr quits ***politics***(AFP)

Iraqi Shiite Cleric Takes Step to Defuse Violence After 24 Killed(New York Times)

**Load-Date:** August 31, 2022

**End of Document**