



Anbar

NCCI Governorate Profile

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Geography

Al-Anbar, or “Anbar,” is the largest Iraqi governorate, covering more than 138,570 km² in western Iraq. This forms approximately a third of Iraq’s total area. The governorate shares borders with Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. The capital, Ramadi city, is home to about 540,474 residents. Other major cities include Falluja and Haditha.

Anbar is one of the driest governorates in Iraq’s western desert climate. Some of Anbar is part of the Syrian Desert, characterized by steppe and desert terrain. Most of Anbar is considered as a topographical continuation of the Arabian Peninsula plateau region. It has some small hills and a number of valleys (wadis), including Wadi Rordan. Given a decline in land preservation and a lack of natural vegetation, the land is often exposed to the elements and prone to severe erosion.

Among the most important agricultural crops are potatoes, which are harvested in the spring and fall. Wheat, barley and maize (corn) are also commonly grown in Anbar. The governorate is known for the production of phosphates and fertilizer. It is also rich in minerals such as sulfur, gold and oil. However, Anbar has not been extensively explored for oil.

The average rainfall in Anbar is 115 millimetres per year. Summer temperatures may reach as high as 45 degrees Celsius, and may fall as low as 9 degrees Celsius in the winter. The Euphrates river is a main water source for residents of Anbar. The river flows southeasterly through seven of Anbar’s districts: Al-Qa’im, Ana, Haditha, Heet, Rawa, Ramadi and Falluja. Al-Rutbah district encompasses more than half of Anbar’s area, and is located in the southwestern desert expanse.

Population

Even though it is the largest governorate, Anbar is one of the most sparsely populated regions in Iraq. In 2003, NCCI estimated that the population of Anbar was 1,230,140¹. In 2009, the IAU estimated that the population of Anbar was 148,598, or about 5% of Iraq's total population.

Anbar is an essential part of the Sunni Triangle, an area northwest of Baghdad that is mainly inhabited by Sunni Muslims, some of who are known to support the Ba'ath party and former regime. The socio-political fabric of Anbar has traditionally revolved around tribes and local hierarchies. Tribal leaders and Sunni clerics generally still retain a high level of authority in local affairs.

Anbar was a stronghold of armed Sunni opposition and resistance to occupation by the US-led Multi-National Forces in Iraq (MNF-I). Post-2003 invasion, insurgent groups, including Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI), operated in Anbar under a low profile with some degree of tribal support.

Historical Overview

"Anbar" is derived from the ancient Arabic word "Nabar," which means "the high land." This word signifies a repository for dry storage. Anbar was considered among the most important locations during the Sassanid occupation of Mesopotamia, and was also one of the most important Babylonian locations. It was a dominant war location to protect the capital of Baghdad from Roman attacks. In the Abbasid era, the first Abbasid Caliph Abul-Abbas Muhammad bin Abdullah—known as "El-Safah"—made Anbar the capital of the Abbasid state in the year 134 (of the Hijra calendar). El Safah built many palaces in Anbar.

The second Abbasid Caliph, Abu Jafaar Al-Mansur, remained in Anbar until he moved the capital to Baghdad in the year 145 (Hijra calendar). Armies generally crossed into or out of Iraq through this region. Anbar was also exposed to a lot of movement; throughout the history of Mesopotamia, many migrant groups from diverse regions of the world settled permanently in Anbar, building additional palaces and temples in the area.

Post-2003

Anbar is often considered a symbol and stronghold of Iraqi nationalism, as well as resistance to the US invasion and subsequent occupation. Confrontations between civilians and the MNFI-troops were especially frequent and severe between 2003-2004. In the second month of the US occupation of Anbar, US troops reportedly fired on a crowd of unarmed protestors outside of a local school, resulting in more than 87 casualties and drawing local and international condemnation.

Aside from Baghdad, Anbar witnessed more fighting and killing than any other governorate since the US-led occupation of Iraq began in 2003. More than 30,000 residents of Anbar, including civilians and fighters, were killed between 2004 and 2007.

On the 31st March 2004, Iraqi insurgents ambushed a convoy and killed four private American military contractors employed by Blackwater USA (now known as XE Services). In response, US troops executed the "First Battle of Falluja" (also known as "Operation Vigilant Resolve") by early April 2004. While at least 60,000 civilians fled Falluja before the attack, the US blocked any men "of military age" from leaving, and many women and children did not have an opportunity to escape. The MNF-I troops encircled the city, imposed

¹ "Population Estimates by District." *NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq*. 2003

curfews, and orchestrated intense aerial strikes in a so-called “pacification operation” to “re-establish security” in Falluja and other surrounding areas.

The “First Battle of Falluja” marked a significant turning point in the conflict, as it was the largest combat mission since the US government officially declared an “end of major hostilities.” “Insurgents,” rather than Ba’ath party members and Saddam allies, were emerging as the new, primary enemies of the MNF-I. Following the operation, the MNF-I surrounded Falluja with checkpoints and increased the number of forces patrolling the governorate.

The “Second Battle of Falluja” (also known as “Operation Phantom Fury”) was among the MNF-I’s most violent military engagements in Iraq. US officials shifted the focus from Ba’athists to AQI and other insurgent groups. Many US military officials claimed that top AQI leader, Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, was headquartered in Falluja. While thousands of civilians fled Falluja before the MNF-I attack on 8th November 2004, tens of thousands of residents were trapped in the city, caught between insurgent and MNF-I crossfire. Although no precise statistics are available, it is estimated that thousands of Iraqi civilians died in this military engagement.

Experts estimate that more than 70% of Falluja’s infrastructure was damaged between 2003-2004. 60 of Falluja’s 80 schools were destroyed. In 2005, US officials stopped refuting independent media reports that the MNF-I used white phosphorous and napalm in the First and Second Battles of Falluja. Amnesty International and other human rights organizations contend that the US and its allies used these highly lethal weapons in densely populated civilian areas; such military operations are illegal based on international law.

Recently, a public health report on residents in Falluja revealed an alarming phenomenon: locals are suffering from increasing rates of terminal cancer, congenital birth defects, and even sexual mutations. This suggests that some of the weaponry used by the MNF-I in the assaults against Falluja may have contained depleted uranium, a radioactive substance used in shells to increase their lethality. Despite many Fallujan’s unified pleas for the international community to conduct an impartial investigation and trace the cause(s) of these illnesses, no major inquiry or tribunal has yet been arranged to date.

A number of factors—including AQI’s increased targeting of tribal leaders, politicians, and police officers in Anbar—led many Sunni insurgents to realign with MNF-I beginning in January 2006. Sheikh Nasser Al-Mukhlif—a leader of the influential Abu Fahd tribe, Iraqi Prime Minister Al-Jafaari, and the US Ambassador agreed that US forces would be replaced with local fighters throughout much of Anbar. In exchange, local tribal leaders and fighters were charged with expelling foreign fighters and isolating AQI. The fighters also received arms and weapons, \$300 monthly salaries, and other benefits from the MNF-I. After this agreement was formalized, Sheikh Nasser Al-Mukhlif, as well as other tribal and police leaders, were assassinated by AQI. In turn, this further exacerbated tensions between local residents and insurgent groups. The so-called “Anbar Awakening” was underway.

-The Pentagon has credited the Sunni Sahwa (“Awakening”) fighters, often referred to as the “Sons of Iraq,” as responsible for significantly curbing AQI’s influence in Baghdad, Anbar and many other governorates that witnessed the worst bloodshed and violence from 2006-2008. After some delay, Anbar was the tenth province transferred to Provincial Iraqi Control in September 2008.

In recent months, developing security trends seem to indicate that instability may return to Anbar. The Iraqi national government is no longer actively ensuring security for—or financially compensating—Sahwa fighters. Furthermore, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) recently disarmed many Sahwa fighters, prompting Sahwa leaders to warn that their cooperation with the ISF in unstable governorates will cease if more weapons permits are further revoked.

Leaders and members of the Sahwa movement have been popular targets for sophisticated, well-planned assassinations in Anbar and other predominantly Sunni governorates. These violent incidents generally involve gunmen, sometimes disguised as ISF members, attacking former or current Sahwa members in their homes or neighborhoods with silencer weapons or sticky bombs. Many disarmed Sahwa members can no longer defend themselves against the potential enemies that they made as a result of assisting ISF and MNF-I over the past years. This may have dangerous consequences, as the Sahwa have become a critical aspect of Iraq’s delicate security situation—particularly in Anbar.

Numerous attacks in Anbar have recently targeted the homes of officials, and particularly high-ranking police officers. Unidentified groups of gunmen have planted and blown-up IEDs in private residences, typically while officials are at home with their families. According to NCCI's Updates from the Field, this type of attack occurs on a frequent basis, about once a week, in Ramadi and Falluja. These patterns of violence aim to undermine Iraqis' confidence in the local police and the ISF's abilities to secure Anbar. =

Provincial Council

Members and Contacts

	Name	Position	Work Number
1	Qassim Muhammed Abdul	Governor	N/A
2	Haket Jassim Zeidan	Deputy Governor	07906406855
3	Dr. Talib Hammad Hussein	Chairperson of the Environmental and Health Committee	07904560931
4	Ibtisam Muhammed Dirib	Chairperson of the Educational and Childrearing Committee	N/A
5	Ali Muhammed Dibib	Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee	07906739586
6	Faysal Hussein	Chairperson of the Irrigation and Agricultural Committee	07801444221
7	Fatima Khalif Saleh	Chairperson of the Work and Social Committee	N/A

Coalitions in the Provincial Council and Number of Seats

Political Entities	Number of Parliamentary Seats	Number of Provincial Governorate Seats
The Iraqi List	11	2
United Iraqi Front	2	6
Sahwa Alliance of Iraq and the Independent Nation	1	8
Organization of Iraqi National Projects	0	6
National Movement of Reform and Development ("The Solution")	0	3
Organization of National Unity	0	2
List of the Tribes of Iraq	0	2

Humanitarian Overview

The standard of living of Anbar residents plummeted significantly post-2003—especially in cities that were heavily invaded by MNF-I, like Ramadi and Falluja.

Hundreds of thousands of Fallujans became overnight refugees after the April 2004 MNF-I invasion, living outside of the city in poor conditions without running water or electricity. Since the invasion, many Fallujans have faced obstacles in trying to return to the city.

Those who wish to enter Falluja city must have a retina scan, record their fingerprints, and obtain an issued ID card from the Iraqi authorities. Many Fallujans express that they live in a “big jail,” deprived of basic services and constricted by frequently tightening security measures. Furthermore, aid workers’ access to Falluja and other districts of Anbar is frequently impeded by MNF-I “security crackdowns,” which sometimes last as long as one month.

Inside Falluja city, electricity and running water has not yet been restored to most homes. Despite an on-going sewage system construction project that began six years ago, Falluja still lacks a functioning sewage treatment system. Waste from homes is often channelled into the streets, where it then seeps into drinking water supplies and the Euphrates river. In 2008, a UNICEF team conducted a health assessment in several districts of Anbar and remarked that “up to 52% of the surveyed children under five had experienced a diarrhoeal episode in the two weeks prior to being surveyed².” Several cholera outbreaks have also been reported in Anbar; the worst cholera epidemics acutely affected children, particularly between 2006-2008.

Anbar’s electricity supply is the lowest in Falluja city. In Heet, Ramadi, and Al-Rutba, at least 79% of households also have power cuts of more than 11 hours daily, or are not connected to the national power grid. Many households have as little as 4-6 hours of interrupted electricity daily. The generally low access to a reliable electricity supply means that water services are also routinely interrupted, and water scarcity is acute in Anbar. Between 33-45% of households in Heet, Ramadi, and Al-Rutba were not connected to the general water network in 2009.

Cancer rates have dramatically risen in many districts of Anbar. Leukemia rates have reportedly increased 38-fold in Falluja between 2003 and 2009. Iraqi officials and doctors have also reported that the rate of stillborn and paralyzed newborns, often with other congenital birth defects, has increased significantly since the US-led invasion. Exposure to toxic weapons (such as cluster bombs, white phosphorous and depleted uranium), psychological stress from war zone conditions, malnutrition, and pollution are among the possible factors leading to these alarming trends.

Most hospitals in Anbar are not adequately equipped to handle the community’s critical, emerging health issues, such as a marked increase in brain tumour prevalence in children under five and neural tube defects in newborns. The Iraqi Ministry of Health rates Anbar at “high risk” for health issues, and says that access to and utilization of Anbar’s health facilities rate poorly. Chronic malnutrition in children under five years of age is the highest in the districts of Al-Qa’im, Rawa and Haditha.

Anbar’s number of IDPs is below the national average, with an estimated 55,176 in 2009, although many IDPs are not officially registered with any organization. At approximately 3:1, the ratio of the number of returnees to Anbar is higher than the national average. By 2009, 18,522 returnees were officially registered and resettled in Anbar.

The unemployment rate for men in Anbar rests at about 25%³. About 18% of women are part of the work force⁴. Falluja city—the second largest city in Anbar by population, with an estimated 529,498 residents in 2007 (WFP-VAM)—has one of the highest concentrations of poverty in Iraq.

² “UNICEF Humanitarian Action Update.” *United Nations Children’s Fund*. 19 Jan. 2009. <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/HAU_Iraq_19_Jan09.pdf>.

³ “Governorate Profile for Anbar.” *Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit and OCHA*. March 2009. <<http://www.iauiraq.org/reports/GP-Anbar.pdf>>.

Presence of NGOs

According to NCCI's Local NGOs (LNGOs) Mapping Survey (last updated in June 2010), there are about 17 LNGOs operating in Anbar. Most of these LNGOs were established between 2003-2004. LNGOs in this governorate primarily work in the sectors of IDPs/refugee issues, health and human rights. Few NGOs work in the sectors of nutrition, education or protection.

LNGOs operating in Anbar identified a lack of community understanding of the role of NGOs and a lack of sufficient funding as their biggest obstacles. In terms of what NGO leaders would most like to develop and improve, the priorities in Anbar are as follows: NGO management, project management (which includes proposal writing, project cycle management, and monitoring & evaluation) and adherence to international humanitarian and NGO principles.

According to NCCI's Survey of International NGOs (INGOs) operating in Iraq (conducted in April 2010), at least thirteen INGOs have projects in Anbar. Areas of activities include projects related to Health, Mine Risk Education, Education, Protection, Shelter, IDPs, Refugees, Water Sanitation, and capacity building for LNGOs.

Culture

Anbar is distinguished by tribal customs. Tribalism influences many characteristics in its present society, and the most well-known tribes have a long heritage and history in the region. Generosity, good will, courage, solidarity and other related characteristics are highly valued in this context, and the enduring power of tribal loyalty and ties have also earned the governorate a nationwide reputation.

The governorate is also known for traditional costumes. In particular, wearing the dishdasha and a traditional Arab headdress (generally with a kuffiyeh scarf) reflects a degree of prestige, dignity and even nobility in the governorate. Some wear suits, especially for formal occasions.

Anbar is known for its famous meals and dishes. Al-Dalemea, a food named for the tribe of Dulaim in Anbar, is very popular and is served at all occasions, including weddings and funerals. The city of Falluja is considered one of the governorate's best areas in terms of food. The Falluja kabab is perhaps the most famous dish from Anbar.

Events like weddings do not revolve around the individual; rather, they provide an opportunity for large, tribal-based gatherings. There are huge feasts at such occasions, and in general, every person who knows the groom attends a wedding celebration. Festivities are frequently punctuated with gunfire and the Anbarian dabka (a local form of dance).

⁴ "Governorate Profile for Anbar." *Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit and OCHA*. March 2009. <<http://www.iauiraq.org/reports/GP-Anbar.pdf>>.

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