Deadly bombings rock Baghdad

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At least 34 were killed and more than 100 wounded in a series of car bomb attacks across Baghdad on Thursday. Bombs struck Baladiyat, al Shurta al-Rabaa, Kadhimiyah, and Husseiniya, among other districts. One attack struck near the US Green Zone diplomatic complex.

Iraq's current monthly death toll is at its highest since 2008 and the country has seen intensified spasms of sectarian violence in recent months. July 2013 was the bloodiest single month in Iraq since 2008, with over 1,000 killed and 2,326 wounded. So far, 300 have died in August. Sectarian violence has killed over 3,400 Iraqis since the beginning of 2013. Coordinated attacks involving several car bombs take place regularly.

At least 80 died on Saturday when bombs exploded at several markets, street shops, and parks. Monday saw a series of attacks killing at least 22. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), an umbrella group composed of Al Qaeda in Iraq and other Islamist militias, claimed responsibility for the bombings.

Iraq's government, led by Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki, is carrying out repression on a massive scale. In response to this week's bombings, the Shia-majority government announced that it will continue its policy of mass arrests of oppositionists, mostly Sunnis. The regime has been executing oppositionists and imprisoning hundreds of thousands of Sunnis, often without charges, in prisons controlled by sectarian militias. By inflaming sectarian tensions through attacks against Sunnis, the Maliki regime maintains the division and subordination of the Iraqi working class.

The ISIS was formed in April of 2013, choosing its name to indicate its ties to Islamists fighting against the Assad regime, including the al Nusra Front. In an audio statement released at the time, the leader of ISIS referred to al Nusra as the organization's branch in Syria. A faction within al Nusra has since designated itself the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant to confirm its fealty to the ISIS.

The al Nusra Front is the best-trained and most effective force among the militias fighting to bring down the Assad regime in Syria. While US officials may publicly denounce al Nusra, the effect of US policy is to channel arms and financial support to the group and other extremist groups serving as proxy forces for US imperialism. If the Iraqi leadership fails to toe the US line, it may face a similar fate at the hands of al Nusra's allies, the ISIS.

US Secretary of State John Kerry delivered a message to the Maliki government Thursday, saying that the Iraqi regime must halt the flow of Iranian arms across its territory en route to Assad.

The Shia-majority Maliki government has close ties to Iran, and has been accused by the US of allowing shipments of Iranian weapons bound for the Syrian government to pass through its airspace. The US clearly intends to take advantage of the wave of bombings to pressure Maliki to abandon his alliance with Iran, the main US adversary in the region. Having devastated Iraq and turned Iraqi politics into a cauldron of sectarian slaughter, the US is now creating conditions for a region-wide conflagration by waging a proxy war in Syria and preparing to attack Iran.

The US strategy for the Middle East as a whole is based on dividing populations along communal lines, thereby blocking a unified movement of the working class and oppressed masses against imperialism. During the occupation, the US cultivated elements of the Sunni tribal population in the west of the country as a basis for its counterinsurgency strategy know as the "Sunni Awakening," while simultaneously helping the Maliki regime organize Shi'ite death squads. For the US ruling class, increased sectarian bloodshed across the Middle East is a main policy objective.

Social conditions in Iraq are ruinous. The population endures a severe lack of basic necessities, including

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electricity, sanitation and clean drinking water. The country's infrastructure, which was utterly demolished by years of US sanctions, invasion and occupation, remains in a desperate condition.

Estimates of total Iraqi deaths resulting from the 2003 US invasion range between 700,000 and 1.4 million, with 4.5 million more forced to flee their homes and become refugees. Millions of women have become widows and/or been forced into prostitution as a result of the US invasion. The rate of birth defects in Fallujah, where the US deployed large quantities of white phosphorous and depleted uranium, exceeds that seen in Nagasaki and Hiroshima after the atomic bomb attacks on those cities.

The bombings in Iraq are paralleled by new outbursts of sectarian violence in Lebanon. A large car bomb exploded in southern Beirut on Thursday, killing as many as 20 and wounding at least 120 more. Reports have suggested that the bombing, which struck a major Hezbollah stronghold, was the worst attack in Lebanon since the civil war of 1975-1990. A group called Battalions of Ayesha claimed responsibility for the attack and denounced Hezbollah areas in Lebanon as "colonies of Iran." The US-engineered war in Syria is, slowly but surely, igniting another war within Lebanon.

Elias Hanna, a retired Lebanese general, told the BBC that the intervention of Lebanon-based Hezbollah fighters in the war in Syria raises the likelihood of civil war.

"You cannot go as Hezbollah, a part of the Iranian axis and, as a Shia go to Syria and kill the Sunnis and come back and live in Lebanon surrounded by the Sunnis. It will create what we call internal strife in Lebanon …maybe we are heading toward a civil war; it's going to be maybe the bloodiest civil war in Lebanon," Hanna said.

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