

Mid-East e-News

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Welcome

Don't panic! **This Month** has not vanished! Starting with this issue it has been moved to occupy the whole of the last page. This will enable us to cover the whole month, and still have space to highlight events occurring in the last day or two before distribution.

If you have been given this newsletter by a friend, or had it forwarded to you, make sure of your own copy twice a month by requesting it from

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Israel – Politics

Israel's parliament is known as the Knesset. It has 120 members, elected by a system of proportional representation. This uses a 'closed lists' method, where each party presents a list of candidates, which are voted on *en bloc*. Voters cannot choose the individuals, nor the order they are appointed from the list. The number of seats each party obtains in the Knesset depends on their percentage of the vote, excepting those with less than the 1.5% cut-off limit.

Partly as a consequence of the election method, Israel has, since its foundation in 1948, been ruled by successive coalition governments. Until 1977 these coalitions were built around the Labor party, which grew out of the Mandate-era labor movement, including the *Histadrut*, (a federation of Labor unions founded by David Ben Gurion). These coalitions have been fragile, built as they are out of groups with different, even opposing, goals. With regards to the peace process alone (and the economy, social issues, and other domestic concerns also come into play) progress in one area often means that one or another member becomes disconcerted with the direction, pulls out (or threatens to) of the coalition, and causes government policies to be abandoned.

In this issue we shall look at the primary players, Labor and Likud, over the years. Next issue we shall look at some of the smaller parties in more detail.

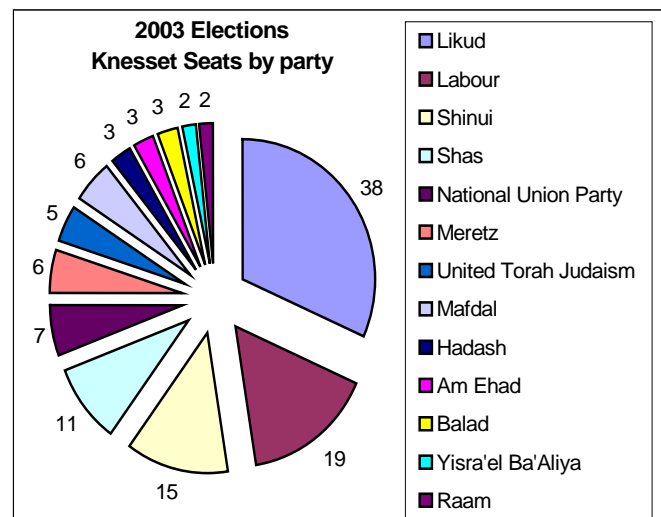
In 1977 Likud came to power for the first time in a coalition with the National Religious Party. Menachim Begin was its first Prime Minister. (He had been part of the resistance against British rule during WWII, a reward for his capture having been posted by them. His militia group, Irgun, was responsible for the bombing of Jerusalem's King David Hotel - used as the British HQ - in 1946). Yitzhak Shamir succeeded Begin in 1983, but a lost vote of confidence led to elections in 1984, in which neither party gained sufficient votes to form a government. The *Government of National Unity* was formed between them, with Shimon Peres and Shamir alternating in the role of P.M. and Foreign Minister until 1990.

In 1990 Likud, led by Yitzhak Shamir, formed a coalition with rightist and religious parties which survived for two years, at which point Labor (Yitzhak Rabin) improved their vote and were able to form a coalition with Meretz (a center-left list) and Shas (ultra-orthodox). In 1995 Rabin was assassinated by a radical Israeli, opposed to his policies towards a Palestinian State, as reflected in the 1994 Oslo Accords. Shimon Peres succeeded Rabin, continuing his policies, including the redeployment of the IDF, and Palestinian elections in 1996.

Peres might have won the next election, in May, 1996, but suicide bombings and Katyusha rockets fired from Lebanon sharply decreased his popularity, and so Benjamin Netanyahu was elected by a small majority, bringing Labor's 4-year reign to an end. In 1999 Ehud Barak (Labor) took power, partly from hopes that he would revive the peace process. Rising antagonism to Palestinian violence - the *Al Aqsa* intifada - led to his loss of coalition support, and an early election in 2000 that brought Likud leader Ariel Sharon his first term in office.



The King David Hotel, on the hill across the valley west of the Jaffa Gate.



Snapshots...

July 2004, Baghdad

The Iraqi army made a well-received first foray into the city, here, Thursday, with a single company from the Iraqi Intervention Forces' 2nd Battalion conducting two foot patrols down the crowded streets of the city's troubled southern district of Abu Deshir.

The operation, originally designed as a combined IA goodwill and security mission, eventually erupted into a jubilant and peaceful celebration for the local residents as crowds lined the streets with great fanfare. (Report by US military officer)



Maj. Keith Peloquin hands out school supplies to children. The supplies were provided by a school in Tampa, Fla., through fund-raising events by the children. Major Peloquin is assigned to the 332nd Expeditionary Wing at Balad Air Base. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Aaron Allmon II) (June 2004)



Typically shy Iraqi girls emerge from their homes in the fishing village of Al Kabani during a visit from Marines on July 25, 2004. Earlier, leaders from 3rd Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment, met with Kabani's leader, Muktar Ismael Mahmoud Hamaad, 36, and district manager, Thayer Hamdallah, 28, to cut the ribbon to a Marine-funded, Iraqi-built, water purification station, which pumps fresh water to approximately 3,000 impoverished people in the area. The \$175,000 project also brought construction and maintenance jobs to the villagers.

Iraq – Coalition fatalities (by Province)

As of July 24th there had been a total of 1027 military fatalities amongst coalition forces. This is in the period from March 23, 2003 to July 24, 2004. Of these, 907 were US military (including reserves, national guard and coast guard), 61 were British and 60 from other nationalities. Out of the total fatalities, 263 have been from non-hostile circumstances, including accidents, medical emergencies, etc., leaving 764 fatalities due to the hostilities.

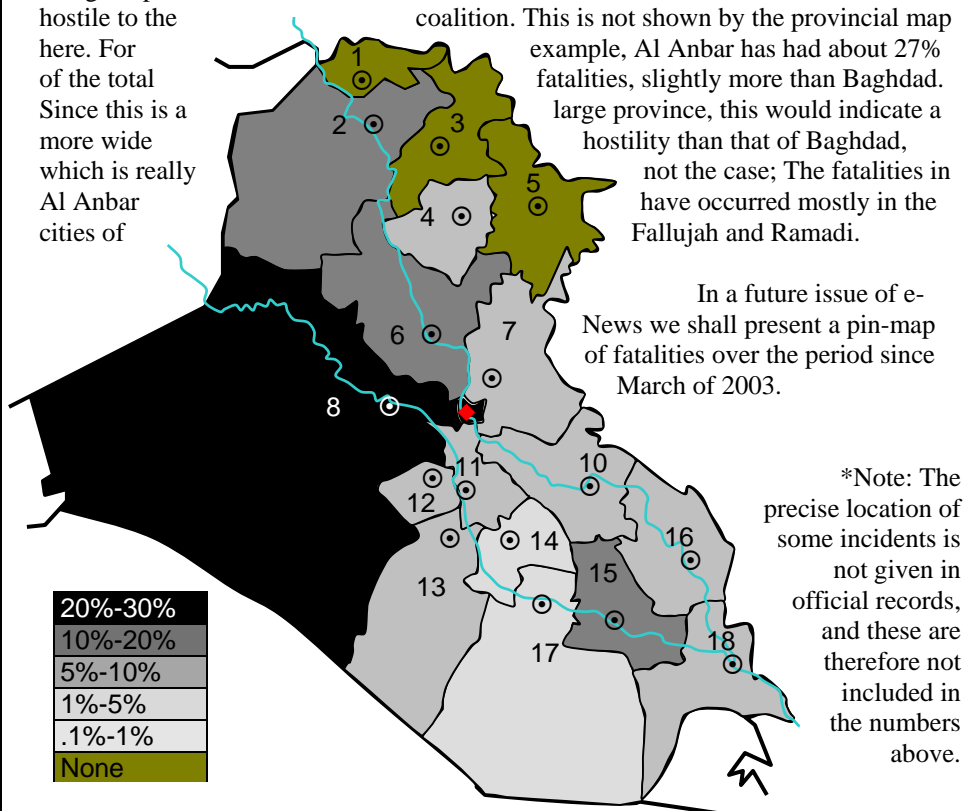
I wanted to present a survey of these fatalities, and this issue I would like to distinguish them by locality, and specifically by province.*

Firstly, note the absence of fatalities in the three Kurdish provinces in the north-east. This is a reminder of how totally different *Kurdistan* is from the remainder of Iraq.

It's also important to note that most hostilities occur in populated areas, with a high percentage being in specific cities, hostile to the here. For of the total Since this is a more wide which is really Al Anbar cities of

Iraq has 18 provinces (*muhafaza*)

	Province	Capital	Military Deaths
1	Dahuk	⊙ Dahuk	0
2	Nineveh	⊙ Mosul	48
3	Erbil	⊙ Erbil	0
4	At Ta'mim	⊙ Kirkuk	16
5	Suleimaniyeh	⊙ Suleimaniyeh	0
6	Salah Ad Din	⊙ Samarra	79
7	Diyalah	⊙ Ba'quba	30
8	Al Anbar	⊙ Ramadi	182
9	Baghdad	◆ Baghdad	172
10	Wasit	⊙ Kut	10
11	Babil	⊙ Hilla	27
12	Karbala	⊙ Karbala	12
13	An Najaf	⊙ Najaf	9
14	Qadisiyah	⊙ Diwaniyah	3
15	Dhi Qar	⊙ Nasariyah	51
16	Maysan	⊙ Amara	9
17	Al Muthanna	⊙ Samawa	3
18	Al Basra	⊙ Basra	31



Islamic Interface – Albania

Albanians refer to themselves as “Sons of the Eagle,” *Shqipetars*. The Shkumbin river divides Albania into two regions, North and South, occupied by Ghegs, and Tosks. Their dialects vary, but are understood by both groups. Under communist rule, since World War II, the policy favored the Tosks, and it was their dialect of Albanian that became the official language.

Historically Albania was successively occupied by western and eastern powers, with the Ottoman empire taking control in the 1500s. Prior to this Albania was primarily a Christian region. Rebellions against Ottoman rule, therefore, were of a religious nature, protecting their faith. A 17th century process of Islamization levied heavy taxes on non-Muslims, a common practice in Islamic countries – and one still observed today. The current balance of Muslim/Christian reflects the success of this policy of the 1600s.

From 1878 Albanians had been struggling for autonomy from the Ottoman empire, and after the First Balkan War (1910-1912) were granted this by the “Great Powers” (Britain, Germany, Russia, France, Austria, Italy) but excluding half of the population which lived in Kosovo (granted to Serbia) and Çamëria (to Greece).

Briefly, during World War II, these two provinces were unified with Albania by the occupying Axis powers. Albanians patriots, nevertheless – independent groups of nationalists, royalists, communists - fought against the Italian and German occupation, with the Communists, led by Enver Hoxha, being successful in 1944. The victors had been aided by Yugoslavia, and at that point Kosovo and Çamëria were restored to their earlier states.

The communist policies included elimination of all vestiges of the feudal order then dominant in Albania, with landlords being deprived of their land, agriculture reorganized, based on the collective farms familiar in the Soviet Union. Women also gained a more prominent role.



Venetian Citadel, Shkoder

During the 1400s, Venetian troops supported Albanians in resisting Ottoman expansion. Their folk hero, Kenderberg, led the defense until his death in 1468.

For years the state has exerted tight control over the people, controlling all media, and preventing the people from traveling overseas. Foreigners were discouraged from visiting, and in 1967 religious affiliation was made illegal. Hoxha declared Albania the world's first atheist state.

It was not until the fall of communism elsewhere in Europe that the government (then led by Ramiz Alia) restored religious freedom and permitted the formation of political parties. This led to thousands of Albanians attempting to flee the country, taking refuge in foreign embassies or sailing illegally into Italian waters. Many of the latter were returned by the authorities.

Politics since then has been turbulent, dominated by the Socialists (ex-communists) and Democrats. Earlier heads of state were imprisoned for a period, and in some cases returned to power as the government changed. Fraudulent investment schemes caused a collapse of civil rule for a period in 1977, though the multinational force that came to restore order was able to leave after three months.

Serious hostilities arose in Kosovo in 1998, sparked by the deaths of some Serbian police. The Serbian reaction was to attack ethnic Albanian civilians, seeking out KLA sympathizers. This conflict, aimed primarily at an undefended Albanian population in Kosovo, lasted through 1998 and into 1999. When Serbia refused to accept a peace agreement, in 1999, NATO air forces attacked Serbian ground positions. The increased violence from Serbian forces caused a flood of refugees into Albania, adding to those who had arrived over the previous years. Eventually nearly half a million Kosovo Albanians fled to Albania, though a large number have since returned.

