
Shingal Tensions, Behind the Scenes

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Summary : The day after the recent tensions between the Iraqi army and the YBŞ on March 2, Iraqi Commander-in-Chief Abdul Amir Rashid Yarallah went to Shingal. Then the military declared that "Shingal is safe now." Occasionally, the relations between the Iraqi army and YBŞ get cold blood, and they face each other.

Intro

The day after the recent tensions between the Iraqi army and the YBŞ on March 2, Iraqi Commander-in-Chief Abdul Amir Rashid Yarallah went to Shingal. Then the military declared that "Shingal is safe now." Occasionally, the relations between the Iraqi army and YBŞ get cold blood, and they face each other. It is not considered a war, but it is a step before declaring war, and in recent times it occurred regularly. Because of Iraq's and the YBŞ's internal situation, it is early to turn into a war, but the issue remains unstable and occasionally arises.

The question is not why this happened, because it was predicted, as repeatedly mentioned. But it's important to remember and to know where Shingal's situation is going!

Peace and instability in Shingal

"The army and police are in Shingal district, now the city is safe, and there are no armed groups," the joint operations commander said. If you look at Shingal only as a central district, it may be true, but the tensions of Shingal are not only in the Shingal district. When they talk about it, the areas of the north (Shimal) mean the districts of 'Snune,' 'Komalga,' and surrounding villages to 'Bari Khanasor,' along with the southern regions of Qublata, which includes Shingal, Komalga, and its surrounding villages with the 'Gr azer' (Qahtania) district of Baaji. Shingal is safer since an arbitrator is created and deployed whenever difficulties between the army and the YBŞ develop. But Shingal is not secure, the forces are there, and tensions will rise again after a while. On the south side, where Shingalis call it 'Qublate', there are more forces of Popular Mobilization Forces and the Lalish regiment. On the east side, between North (Shimal) and 'Qublata', there are Peshmerga forces and Yezidi Protection Forces Haider Shasho, and on the north side in 'Bara,' 'Khanasor' and 'Baramadin Sheikh Shams' From 'Mesto' to 'Gale karse,' and from there to 'Snune' and 'Dugore' towards 'Dahola,' along with a large part of the mountain that is called 'Sardasht,' are areas more covered by the YBŞ.

Shingal will not be safe because it has several military forces, and its security and economic importance are not only linked to the Kurds, Kurdistan Region, and Iraq and is about to gain a greater dimension.

Al-Hool camp and the tensions of Shingal

After signing the Shingal agreement in 2020, many believe that this is the first time the Baghdad government has implemented it earnestly and sent many forces, hammers, and deserts to that area. On the 26th of last month, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi appointed Najm Al-Juburi, the current governor of Nineveh as the mayor of Shingal! It is known that providing security through the army (outside the Shingal district) and the federal police (within a district) and creating a force of 2,500 Shingali soldiers, along with the change of mayor, were in the provisions of the [Shingal Agreement](#) signed in November 2020.

Kadhimi was soon forced to rethink his decision regarding the appointment of Najm Al-Juburi as mayor because of various protests. As far as I know, the prime minister did not ask the second partner of the Shingal Agreement, which is the government of the Kurdistan Region, in the appointment of Najm Al-Juburi. You don't think this was for implementing the Shingal agreement. The selection of a soldier such as Najm Al-Juburi to a place like Shingal also indicates that the government may not put some security issues in its priority.

As it is known, after last year's circumstances in Hasakah's prison, there has been a great deal of fear over the Al-Hool camp, and now they cannot control it. ISIS is ensnaring people in the camp, kills people, and is still unable to find them. Iraq fears the fate of the Al-Hool camp, which is about 10-15 kilometres away from Shingal.

Qasim A'raji, Iraq's national security adviser said that Al-Hool is a real [danger](#). Let's not forget that according to the Shingal agreement, the National Security Agency is one of the officials in the Shingal case. Iraq has decided to return part of the Iraqis in the Al-Hool camp to the Jada camp on the border with Nineveh province. It will also bring back a group of ISIS prisoner fighters who may be around 5,000 to 6,000 in prisons in the Kurdistan Region.

However, Iraqi decision-makers seem to be forced to establish borders in their way. After the incident of a prisoner in Hasakah that crossed the border, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi visited the prison and increased the work of building walls and fences in some of the borders.

The army's movement towards Shingal presents a valuable meaning. Iraq knows it is impossible to overcome it with such a multi-force in Shingal when a problem arises. On the other hand, if there is no danger of ISIS being reunited, the government desires to overcome the situation in Shingal completely. If the government is strengthened, there will be no future for the YBŞ, and the "Shingal Self-Government" can stay like this now.

The conflict of the paths in Shingal

Shingal is now an important area for the forces to compete there, to force their troops against each other without engaging in a direct war, but it is not only that, and the Shingal issue is about to gain an essential geo-economics. In recent years, Iraq has had a dream of becoming a corridor for sea and land transport and wants to find a place for itself through the "Faw Port" project and within the Mersin port, 'Abass' port in (Iran), and 'Sharija' in (UAE), also, by connecting 'Faw' to 'Fishkhabur' through railroads and land roads. Last year, the closure of the Suez Channel caused significant economic damage, causing traffic problems between the White Sea and the Red Sea.

Here's where finding the alternative channel has an international dimension. In December 2021, the first shipload was transferred from Sharjah emirates industrial city to the Iranian Abbas port, and from that place, the shipload transferred to Turkey, and the line is now in operation. If the cargo is transported that way, it will take 6-8 days to reach Turkey, but if it is through the White Sea, the Suez Canal, and the Red Sea, it will take about [21 days](#).

If Iraq completes the 'Faw' port project and repairs its roads to Turkey, it will be an easier way to transport goods between Dubai and Turkey and vice versa. After some Gulf countries besieged Qatar, Iraq opened a water channel for Qatar and sent imported goods through Basra to Qatar, so there is an experience in this. Recently, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates signed [13 agreements](#), one of which was about sea and land roads transportations. Foreign Minister Mawlud Chavushoglu has also said Iraq will be one of the ways to transport goods between Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

There is now a land road between Iraq and Turkey, and it is easy to repair areas where they need to be rebuilt. There is only one big border between 'Tal Afar' and the border. The government has launched a campaign to renovate railroads that pass-through Mosul. The railway network from Basra reaches Nasiriyah and Samawah, Dewaniya and Hillah, and from there to Karbala and Baghdad, and from Baghdad to Baqubah-Samarra, where it reaches 'Wadi al-Mar' on the border with Nineveh province, and goes to 'Hamam Alil,' from there to Mosul and then to Rabia. In old times, the railroads were to Turkey, but the war and the renovation damaged most of the railroads. The government is now working intensively to renovate the railroads, including the ['Wadi al-Mar'](#) station in Mosul, about 120 kilometres from Shingal.

The reopening of Turkey, Iraq, and the gulf corridor means that Iran's path is of little importance if it does not have a replacement! Another point is that Iraq must provide security for Nineveh to open this Corridor. If we look from this point of view and ask about the security of Nineveh in general, not only Shingal, to whom is it good? And to whom isn't it good? Then the tensions in Shingal will be more meaningful.

Of course, this is not just an international issue. Shingal is an essential path for the PKK and the Western Kurdistan

administration, and does not want to lose it. That's why ['Tavdam'](#) in western Kurdistan considered the protection of Shingal as its responsibility.

Shingal and the northern part of the Mosul province are crucial ways to smuggle and it benefits some local commanders for some armed groups. Here, local and regional factors are starting to come to one hand, and a desire appears to be that it is not only Shingal but also the Nineveh flats that shall face tensions. Therefore, the tensions in Shingal and the ongoing missile attacks on the Kurdistan Region in the Nineveh flats are tied. It is one of the purposes of creating obstacles in front of the trade road between the Gulf, Iraq, and Turkey.

Conclusion

The tensions in Shingal are more significant than that of YBŞ. The Shingal problem has been linked to several essential factors in a short period, such as the situation in the Al-Hool camp and the security of the Syrian-Iraqi border. The government's desire to impose its power is in place in the long run. The stronger the government, the more it will weaken the YBŞ. The government has also raised the issue of sovereignty in the Kurdistan Region, and how will it allow another force to continue claiming sovereignty in Shingal in the long run? The government still has a lot left to strengthen, and there are a lot of internal and external problems that have troubled them. The government's actions are more because of the fear of the Al-Hool camp. That's why the situation in Shingal continues from time to time and still tolerates YBŞ's place there. If tensions were on the 'Snune' and 'Khanasor' roads, this time, the following tension would be in most of the northern parts of Shingal. In the short term, with a high possibility, the government will eventually agree to stay in places such as 'Khanasor,' 'Gali Karse', and 'Sardasht' (Shingal Mountain). If Shingal Mountain is controlled by the YBŞ forces, it will not pose a threat to Iraq because they do not have long-range missiles and they only has light weapons.

Controlling the situation in Shingal entirely by the government is against some local and outside interests; the government will not be able to succeed in all the plans concerning Shingal in the short term, such as how the Shingal agreement remained only on paper. But the question of Shingal is no longer just a Kurdish and Iraqi issue. But it has also developed a larger dimension, such as the ISIS war and the geo-economic conflict. Therefore, politically, fixing the matter will be complicated. If the idea of an autonomous administration of the Nineveh and Shingal is revived and succeeds, it will be a winning game for the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Baghdad government. It will protect the rights of the minorities in the Nineveh and Shingal, the security of the Kurdistan Region and Iraq will be able to achieve the dreams of the path!