

# Babil Governorate Profile



Source map: [IAU](#)

## Babil at a Glance

### Fast Facts

- Area: 5119 km<sup>2</sup>
- Average High Temperatures: 14°C (January) to 44°C (July)
- Population: 1,728,132
- Capital City: Hilla
- Average Low Temperatures: 5°C (January) to 29°C (July)
- Population Distribution Rural-Urban: 52,8%-47,2%

## Geography and Climate

The governorate of Babil is located in central Iraq and shares internal boundaries with the governorates of Baghdad, Anbar, Kerbala, Najaf, Qadisiya and Wassit.

The Euphrates River intersects the governorate and splits into the Hindiyah and Hilla branches just south of the town of Musayib. A network of irrigation canals runs through the governorate, supplying the region's farms and orchards with water. Babil has a typical dry, desert climate with temperatures easily exceeding 40°C in summer. Rainfall is very limited and restricted to the period between November and April.

## Population and Administrative Division

Babil is divided into four districts: Al-Mahawil, Al-Musayab, Hashimiya and Hilla. The majority of Babil's inhabitants are Shia Arabs. The governorate also hosts a Sunni minority.

## Economy

Agriculture is the most important sector of Babil's economy. The governorate's fertile irrigated farmland produces a variety of staple crops and legumes. Babil is also the location of a number of archeological sites, including the ruins of the ancient city of Babylon, the namesake of the governorate. These historical sites hold the potential to be developed into tourist attractions.

Babil is thought to contain vast reservoirs of untapped gas and oil, next to significant reserves of other lucrative minerals, offering the governorate another possibility for development. The governorate's capital of Hilla hosts the University of Babylon.

A number of issues are hampering the governorate's economic development. Over the past few years, drought has been harming Babil's agricultural sector, and improper reconstruction efforts during Saddam Hussein's rule caused significant damage to the ruins of Babylon, which deteriorated even further when occupation forces used the area as a military base following the 2003 invasion. Under the Ba'ath regime Babil was an important industrial center, but the governorate's manufactories dilapidated during the last decade and are in need of serious investments.

## **Historical Introduction**

The governorate of Babil is the location of the fabled city of Babylon, and other civilizations like the Seleucid and Sassanid empires all left their traces in the governorate. More recently the governorate was one of the centers of the 1991 Shia uprising. After the 2003 invasion the governorate witnessed several deadly attacks.

The governorate of Babil and its capital city Hilla became one of the centers of the Shiite uprising that swept through southern Iraq in 1991. Following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, a US-led International Coalition intervened and crushed the Iraqi army, forcing it to retreat from Kuwait. After the Iraqi defeat at the hands of the Coalition, mass revolts broke out in March 1991 in Iraqi Kurdistan and the Shiite southern governorates. The uprisings were inspired by the Ba'ath regime's apparent



weakness following its defeat in Kuwait and encouraged by former president George H. Bush's call on the Iraqi people to take down Saddam Hussein themselves. The expected American support for the revolts however did not materialize, and after initial victories the uncoordinated rebels were quickly crushed by the Iraqi army. Unlike the Kurdish region, the Shiite south could not count on a no-fly zone imposed by the International Coalition. Thousands, including civilians, were killed

The reconstructed ruins of Babylon. Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

in the fighting by indiscriminate targeting of rebel held areas using heavy weaponry and helicopters. Many others were detained or executed, only to be found in mass graves after the 2003 invasion.

In March 2003 American forces on their way to Baghdad at first bypassed the governorate of Babil through the so called 'Kerbala Gap', the stretch of land between the Razazah Lake and the city of Kerbala. It was not until the end of March that Hilla was surrounded and taken after days of heavy fighting in and around the city, leading to numerous civilian casualties. The use of cluster munitions by American forces in particular injured or killed many civilians.

After the 2003 invasion the governorate of Babil was repeatedly hit by bomb attacks. Sunni insurgents aiming to incite sectarian violence by targeting the mainly Shia province are believed to have been behind the bombings. A number of these attacks directly targeted the Iraqi Security Forces and the local government, but on other occasions Shia pilgrims and other civilians were singled out by insurgents. The number of attacks in recent years decreased in comparison with the period of 2006-2008, the height of the sectarian conflict, but large scale bombings did take place as recently as March 2014.

The governorate of Babil borders the governorate of Anbar, of which the bigger part was conquered by IS in 2014 and 2015. As of June 2015 no incursions by IS have been reported in Babil.

## Humanitarian Issues

	Population under the poverty line	Unemployment	Enrollment primary education	Enrollment secondary education	Literacy
<b>Babil Governorate</b>	10,9%	9,5%	81,7%	44,7%	82,9%
<b>National Averages</b>	11,5%	11,3%	90,4%	48,6%	79% <sup>1</sup>

In Babil the percentage of people living under the poverty line of \$2,5 a day is comparable to the national average. It should be noted that the poverty numbers decreased drastically over the past few years: the percentage fell from 24,5% in 2007 to 10,9% in 2011. Food insecurity also dropped significantly from 26% in 2007 to 3% in 2011. On education enrollment rates Babil lags behind most other governorates of Iraq. The literacy rate on the other hand is slightly higher than in the rest of the country. The unemployment rate is lower than the national average, but differs greatly between the governorate's districts. Female participation rate in the labor market (18,4%) is among the highest of the country.

Only 80,3% of Babil's inhabitants have sustainable access to an improved water source, which is below the national average of 86,8%. Even though 88,9% of the households are connected to the public water network, 60,8% rate the availability of water as bad or very bad. Less than 5% of the connected households have water available during the entire day. The situation is equally bad concerning access to sanitation and waste water disposal. Only 87,8% of Babil's households have access to an improved sanitation facility, and only 3% relies on the public sewer network for the disposal of waste water. The overwhelming majority of the governorate's population has to rely on septic tanks or covered canals.

The overwhelming majority (91%) of Babil's households rely on the public electricity network as their first source of power. As more than 90% of the population connected to the network reports power cuts of more than twelve hours daily, it is no surprise that more than 80% of the governorate's inhabitants also use a secondary source of power like shared or private generators.

Currently the most pressing humanitarian issue in Babil is the wave of IDPs that fled the IS conquest of large parts of northwestern Iraq in 2014. In June 2015, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated that 58,320 IDPs were staying in Babil. Around 28,000 of them fled the governorate of Ninewa, with another 14,000 coming from neighboring Anbar. More than 13,000 individuals are however displaced inside the governorate of Babil itself. The overwhelming majority of these IDPs fled their homes after June 2014. A smaller group of IDPs in Babil arrived in the governorate fleeing the fighting which erupted in April 2015 in and around the city of Ramadi in the governorate of Anbar. The

<sup>1</sup>As by UNICEF, *State of The World's Children 2015 Country Statistics Table*, [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/iraq\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/iraq_statistics.html) , 25/02/2015. All other data are from JAU, *Babil Governorate Profile* (2013), <http://www.iau-iraq.org/documents/374/GP-Babil%202013.pdf> , 09/06/2015.

local authorities in Babel have imposed strict security measures restricting the entrance of IDPs coming from Anbar.

The majority of IDPs in Babel (29,652) are staying in rented housing. Host families are the second type of shelter, while smaller groups of IDPs also reside in schools, informal settlements or unfinished buildings. IDPs staying in informal settlements or other vulnerable shelter types like schools often lack access to basic humanitarian services like food or healthcare and are also constantly at risk of eviction.

## Presence of NGOs

Please see the [members' area](#) on NCCI's website for full access to our weekly field reports, which include an up to date humanitarian situation overview. NCCI's [online NGO mapping](#) gives an oversight of local and international NGO presence on a governorate level.

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