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Iraq undergoes biggest unrest in two years

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25 February, 2006

THE ARTICLE

Iraq undergoes biggest unrest in two years

Iraq is experiencing its most dangerous period since the fall of Saddam Hussein two years ago. A curfew is in place in Baghdad and three surrounding areas. The government is trying to stop a possible civil war. Tensions are running very high following days of violence between Sunni and Shi'ite groups. Both sides have attacked the other's mosques in the past few days. This has brought tens of thousands of protestors onto the streets, many calling for revenge. Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari has called for calm and said the latest situation is "the most serious challenge to the country's stability".

The event which started the latest unrest was the destruction of the Golden Mosque in the town of Samarra, north of Baghdad. The mosque contains the remains of two holy men who were related to the Prophet Muhammad. A popular Shi'ite cleric, Moqtada Al-Sadr, blamed Sunni Muslims for the destruction. Within hours of the blast, waves of revenge attacks began across Iraq. Angry Shi'ites attacked at least 60 Sunni mosques and the violence has left over 100 people dead. Iraq's most respected Shi'ite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, has asked his followers not to attack Sunni mosques.

WARM-UPS

1. IRAQ FEELINGS: In pairs / groups, talk about your feelings when you read or watch news of Iraq. Do you follow events there as often as you did one or two years ago? What news items most attract your attention?

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Iraq / Saddam Hussein / curfews / civil war / violence / mosques / protestors / revenge / unrest / destruction / shrines / hours / waves / blasts / followers

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

3. WORD ASSOCIATION: In pairs / groups, talk about how the following words might be associated with Iraq:

Roses / resorts / software / tiger economy / tolerance / awards / cosmopolitan / tourism / innovation / leadership / photography / headquarters / pizza / microchips

4. HEADLINES: In pairs / groups, discuss the following “headlines”. How possible is it they might come true?

- a. Civil war breaks out in Iraq.
- b. Iraq now strongest economy in Middle East.
- c. Iraq to host Olympic Games.
- d. US and coalition forces leave Iraq.
- e. Iraq conflict spreads to neighboring countries.
- f. Sunnis and Shi’ites agree to share power.
- g. Iraqi leaders awarded Nobel Peace Prize

Change partners and share what you talked about.

5. SENTENCE STARTERS: With your partner(s), agree on happy endings for the following sentence starters:

- a. Iraq is _____.
- b. Iraq will _____.
- c. Iraq shows _____.
- d. Iraq awarded _____.
- e. Iraq becomes _____.
- f. Iraq signs _____.
- g. Iraq tops _____.

6. CIVIL WAR: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with civil war. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Iraq is at its most dangerous since the fall of Saddam Hussein. | T / F |
| b. There is a curfew in place throughout the whole of Iraq. | T / F |
| c. Tensions between Sunnis and Shi'ites are running very high. | T / F |
| d. Iraq's foreign minister has called for calm. | T / F |
| e. The destruction of the Silver Mosque started the latest unrest. | T / F |
| f. The Golden Mosque contains the remains of Gulf War veterans. | T / F |
| g. Tidal waves washed across Iraq causing widespread damage. | T / F |
| h. A respected Shi'ite asked his followers not to attack Sunni mosques. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a. experiencing | bones |
| b. surrounding | asked |
| c. stop | disquiet |
| d. called | accused |
| e. stability | neighboring |
| f. unrest | explosion |
| g. remains | going through |
| h. blast | security |
| i. blamed | admired |
| j. respected | prevent |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. Iraq is experiencing its | very high |
| b. A curfew | the remains of two holy men |
| c. Tensions are running | which started the latest unrest |
| d. ... brought tens of thousands | waves of revenge attacks began |
| e. Iraq's Foreign Minister | most dangerous period |
| f. The event | respected Shi'ite cleric |
| g. The mosque contains | over 100 people dead |
| h. Within hours of the blast, | is in place in Baghdad |
| i. the violence has left | of protestors onto the streets |
| j. Iraq's most | ... has called for calm |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Iraq undergoes biggest unrest in two years

Iraq is experiencing its most dangerous _____ since the fall of Saddam Hussein two years ago. A curfew is in _____ in Baghdad and three surrounding areas. The government is trying to stop a _____ civil war. Tensions are running very high _____ days of violence between Sunni and Shi'ite groups. Both sides have attacked the other's mosques in the _____ few days. This has brought tens of thousands of _____ onto the streets, many calling for revenge. Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari has called for _____ and said the latest situation is "the most serious challenge to the country's _____".

possible
protestors
period
stability
past
place
calm
following

The event which started the latest _____ was the _____ of the Golden Mosque in the town of Samarra, north of Baghdad. The mosque _____ the remains of two holy men who were related to the Prophet Muhammad. A popular Shi'ite _____, Moqtada Al-Sadr, blamed Sunni Muslims for the destruction. Within _____ of the blast, _____ of revenge attacks began across Iraq. Angry Shi'ites attacked at least 60 Sunni mosques and the _____ has left over 100 people dead. Iraq's most respected Shi'ite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, has asked his _____ not to attack Sunni mosques.

destruction
hours
cleric
violence
unrest
followers
contains
waves

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Iraq undergoes biggest unrest in two years

Iraq is experiencing its most dangerous _____ since the fall of Saddam Hussein two years ago. A curfew is in place in Baghdad and three _____ areas. The government is trying to stop a possible civil war. Tensions are _____ very high following days of violence between Sunni and Shi'ite groups. Both sides have attacked the other's mosques in the past few days. This has brought tens of thousands of _____ onto the streets, many calling for revenge. Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari has called for calm and said the latest _____ is "the most serious challenge to the country's _____".

The event which started the latest _____ was the destruction of the Golden Mosque in the town of Samarra, north of Baghdad. The mosque contains the _____ of two holy men who were _____ to the Prophet Muhammad. A popular Shi'ite cleric, Moqtada Al-Sadr, _____ Sunni Muslims for the destruction. Within hours of the blast, waves of revenge attacks began across Iraq. Angry Shi'ites attacked at least 60 Sunni mosques and the _____ has left over 100 people dead. Iraq's most _____ Shi'ite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, has asked his followers not to attack Sunni mosques.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words '**civil**' and '**war**'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "IRAQ" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about Iraq.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| • period | • unrest |
| • curfew | • remains |
| • running | • blamed |
| • streets | • waves |
| • calm | • respected |
| • challenge | • followers |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Do you follow news of Iraq regularly?
- c. Are you surprised by the recent events in Iraq?
- d. What do you think would happen in Iraq if there was a civil war?
- e. What do you think U.S. would do if civil war broke out?
- f. When do you see peace returning to Iraq?
- g. Do you think the conflict in Iraq will spread to neighboring countries?
- h. What do you think is necessary to bring all the sides together and live peacefully?
- i. Do you think coalition forces leaving Iraq would help things or make things worse?
- j. Has your country ever experienced civil war?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Where do you think Iraq will be ten years from now?
- d. What do you think would be happening in Iraq now if the US-led coalition had never invaded?
- e. Do you think there is a need for more intervention from U.S. or other international forces to keep the peace?
- f. What do you think would be the consequences of all out civil war in Iraq?
- g. How would you feel if someone destroyed one of your most important cultural or religious assets?
- h. Do you think anyone in Iraq has the power or influence to bring calm to Iraq?
- i. Are you optimistic or pessimistic regarding Iraq's future?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find information about the latest events in Iraq. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. PLACE OF WORSHIP: Make a poster about an important place of worship in your religion or culture. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone find out similar things?

4. IRAQ: Write an essay about Iraq. Decide whether you want to focus on the people, culture, political situation or future. Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

TRUE / FALSE:

a. T b. F c. T d. T e. F f. F g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. experiencing	going through
b. surrounding	neighboring
c. stop	prevent
d. called	asked
e. stability	security
f. unrest	disquiet
g. remains	bones
h. blast	explosion
i. blamed	accused
j. respected	admired

PHRASE MATCH:

a. Iraq is experiencing its	most dangerous period
b. A curfew	is in place in Baghdad
c. Tensions are running	very high
d. ... brought tens of thousands	of protestors onto the streets
e. Iraq's Foreign Minister	... has called for calm
f. The event	which started the latest unrest
g. The mosque contains	the remains of two holy men
h. Within hours of the blast,	waves of revenge attacks began
i. the violence has left	over 100 people dead
j. Iraq's most	respected Shi'ite cleric

GAP FILL:

Iraq undergoes biggest unrest in two years

Iraq is experiencing its most dangerous **period** since the fall of Saddam Hussein two years ago. A curfew is in **place** in Baghdad and three surrounding areas. The government is trying to stop a **possible** civil war. Tensions are running very high **following** days of violence between Sunni and Shi'ite groups. Both sides have attacked the other's mosques in the **past** few days. This has brought tens of thousands of **protestors** onto the streets, many calling for revenge. Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari has called for **calm** and said the latest situation is "the most serious challenge to the country's **stability**".

The event which started the latest **unrest** was the **destruction** of the Golden Mosque in the town of Samarra, north of Baghdad. The mosque **contains** the remains of two holy men who were related to the Prophet Muhammad. A popular Shi'ite **cleric**, Moqtada Al-Sadr, blamed Sunni Muslims for the destruction. Within **hours** of the blast, **waves** of revenge attacks began across Iraq. Angry Shi'ites attacked at least 60 Sunni mosques and the **violence** has left over 100 people dead. Iraq's most respected Shi'ite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, has asked his **followers** not to attack Sunni mosques.