



At least 68 people are reported to have been killed in bomb attacks in southern Iraq and in the capital Baghdad. Officials said 44 people died in a suicide attack targeting Shia pilgrims in the city of Nasiriya.

Earlier, at least 24 people were killed in a number of blasts in Shia areas of Baghdad. Sectarian tensions have risen after the last US combat troops left in December and an arrest warrant was issued for Sunni Vice-President Tariq al-Hashemi.

The BBC's Rafid Jabboori in Baghdad says Iraq is going through a severe political crisis and the situation in the country is tense.

The Interior Ministry's National Centre for Operations said the number of dead in the Nasiriya attack was 44.

**TVNL Comment: Sectarian violence was held in check by Saddam Hussein. This is another gift to the Iraqi people from Operation Iraqi Freedom.**

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