



## **Factsheet**

### **Tikrit Air Academy (Camp Speicher) massacre**

Launch of the investigation: August 2019

#### **SCOPE OF INVESTIGATION**

The investigation focused on the massacre by ISIL (Da'esh) of soldiers, cadets and volunteers who left the Tikrit Air Academy in Salah al-Din province on 11-12 June 2014 and were taken to the Tikrit Presidential Palace Complex and other locations, where they were held against their will, mistreated and executed.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF VICTIM GROUP**

Most soldiers, cadets and volunteers who left the Tikrit Air Academy on 11-12 June 2014 were Shi'as from regions in the south of Iraq.

The Shi'as represent one of the two major branches of the Islamic religion. The Shi'a branch differentiates itself from the Sunni branch in that they believe that the leadership of the Muslim community after Prophet Mohammad belongs to Ali ibn Abi Talib, Mohammad's cousin and son-in-law and his successors. The word "Shi'ite" itself, means "supporter/follower", in the Arabic language. Shi'as have their own interpretation of Islamic history and theology as well as their own holy days of remembrance and holy sites. Shi'as form the majority of the population in Iraq.

#### **MAIN LOCATIONS/AREAS**

Tikrit and surrounding areas, Salah al-Din governorate

#### **MAIN INVESTIGATIVE ACTIVITIES**

As part of its work, the Investigative Team screened and/or interviewed more than 60 witnesses, including victims, relatives, eyewitnesses and perpetrators. It also collected documentary evidence, including dozens of judicial statements, audio-visual evidence, including dozens of videos and hundreds of photographs, forensic evidence, including satellite imagery, as well as significant amounts of open-source information, including social media posts. In 2022, the Investigative Team prepared, in collaboration with SITU, a [video](#) describing how the killing operation unfolded.

#### **COOPERATION**

The Investigative Team substantially benefitted from its cooperation with the Judicial Investigation Commission of Camp Speicher Crimes, the Russafa Central Investigative Court, the Salah al-Din Federal Appellate Court and the Investigative Court in Salah al-Din, courts which provided ample relevant evidence to the Investigative Team. Furthermore, the Ministry of Justice facilitated the interviewing of convicts by



the Investigative Team. The work undertaken by the Mass Graves Directorate and the Medico-Legal Directorate were incorporated in the Investigative Team's factual findings related to the massacre.

The Investigative Team's evidence collection efforts were supported by the Center for the Documentation of Extremist Crimes as well as non-governmental organizations and victim associations representing the interests of victims and survivors of the massacre and their family members. The Investigative Team met many times representatives of such victim associations and updated them about UNITAD's work.

A confidential report on the Tikrit Air Academy massacre was shared with the Iraqi Supreme Judicial Council in June 2024.

### OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The Investigative Team also reached out to the Tikrit community and organized meetings with local dignitaries and civil society representatives. During these meetings, the Investigative Team explained its work and invited community members to contact UNITAD if they had relevant evidence about the Tikrit Air Academy massacre. In an effort to have the victims' voices heard, in June 2024, on the tenth commemoration of the massacre, UNITAD published a series of short interviews with family members of deceased or missing victims, reflecting the suffering, but also the resilience of the affected community.

[Mohsen's Mother](#)  
[Amir's Mother](#)  
[Hayder's Mother](#)  
[Ali's Mother](#)  
[Montazer's Mother](#)

[Karim's Wife](#)  
[Ibrahim's Mother](#)  
[Imad's Wife](#)  
[Haider's Father](#)  
[Hussein's Mother](#)

[Ahmed's and Mohamed's Mother](#)  
[Ahmed's and Mohamed's Father](#)  
[Karrar's Father](#)  
[Ala's Mother](#)  
[Mustafa's Mother](#)

### OVERVIEW OF FACTUAL FINDINGS

On 11 June 2014, ISIL (Da'esh) entered Tikrit, quickly defeating the few remaining security personnel who resisted, released prisoners from prisons and ransacked governmental and civilian buildings. The same day, small pockets of soldiers, cadets and volunteers started leaving Tikrit Air Academy, located in the north of the city. The next day, 12 June 2014, a long column of soldiers, cadets and volunteers left Tikrit Air Academy, most of them heading on foot towards Baghdad. The column was intercepted by ISIL (Da'esh) at various points along the Baghdad–Mosul highway. Captives were loaded into trucks and most of them transferred to the Presidential Palace Complex, located in the south of Tikrit. Sunnis were separated from Shi'as. Upon consulting senior ISIL (Da'esh) leadership, the Wali of Salah al-Din ordered that Sunnis were to be offered repentance while Shi'as were to be killed. As a result, around 1,700 captives who were taken to the Presidential Palace Complex were assembled into groups, taken to various locations on the palace grounds and shot at close range. Bodies were either buried in mass graves in the complex or thrown into the nearby river. The killing operation lasted for at least three days with the active involvement of an estimated 100 to 150 ISIL (Da'esh) members. Other captives intercepted on the Baghdad-Mosul highway may have been taken to other locations and are missing to this day.



## OVERVIEW OF PRELIMINARY LEGAL FINDINGS

The Investigative Team found that there were reasonable grounds to believe that ISIL (Da'esh) maintained a genocidal policy against Shi'as of Iraq, mainly by targeting and killing adult male members of that group, and ISIL (Da'esh) members participating in the killing operation at Tikrit's Presidential Palace Complex possessed **genocidal intent** in relation to some 1,700 adult Shi'a males executed between 12 and at least 14 June 2014. To reach a finding that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Tikrit Air Academy killing operation may amount to genocide, other instances of ISIL (Da'esh) killings against Shi'as, within the territory controlled by the armed group and in the context of an ISIL (Da'esh) genocidal policy towards the Shi'as of Iraq, must be corroborated and examined together. Such instances include the Badush Central Prison massacre as well as the crimes committed against Shi'a Turkmen and Shi'a members of the Shabak community.

The Investigative Team also found that there were reasonable grounds to believe that the publication of ISIL (Da'esh) videos related to these attacks may amount to the crime of direct and public incitement to commit genocide against Shi'as. The same killings may also amount to the **crimes against humanity** of murder, extermination, imprisonment, other inhumane acts, torture and persecution, as well as to the **war crimes** of murder, arbitrary detention, cruel treatment and torture.

## RELEVANT PUBLIC DOCUMENTS

[Camp Speicher: A Pattern of Mass Killing and Genocidal Intent \(June 2024\)](#)