

[redacted] many residents of the affluent sections of Baghdad fled to the north or to Shia holy cities of Najaf and Kerbala in the south before or during the early days of the coalition air attacks. In contrast, Iraqis in the poorer--probably Shia--sections of the capital are hunkering down and trying to cope.

We do not have accurate figures for refugees or civilian casualties.

--Press reports indicate several thousand Iraqis already have fled to neighboring countries. Iran is now the only viable refuge, however, because of Iraq's closure of the Jordanian border to refugees this week, its complete closure of the Turkish border last week, and its closure of the Syrian border for years.

--The US Mission in Geneva reports the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Society are preparing shelter and supplies in neighboring countries for up to 300,000 displaced people.

--Iraq's ambassador to the UN claimed that 41 civilians had died and 191 had been wounded as of 23 January. [redacted], however, [redacted] neither Iraqi authorities nor civilian witnesses would verify this count.

Political Climate

Reporting on the political climate in Iraq is fragmentary--the regime has restricted the movement of civilians and requires reporters to clear all news items with Iraqi censors--but the regime appears fully in control. There have been no credible reports of unrest since the war began.

--According to Yugoslav press, Iraqi citizens in Baghdad are scared but not totally demoralized; they listen to authorities and are disciplined.

[redacted]
Iraqis remain steadfast in not voicing disagreement with the regime, especially to Westerners.

--Saddam has only his most loyal military and security personnel in Baghdad, reducing the threat of a military coup. The military forces in the capital are drawn from the elite Republican Guards.

Baghdad continues to try to mobilize Arab support in the hope of weakening coalition resolve.