

Governorate Profile Missan



Source image: JAPU

Missan at a Glance

Fast Facts

- Area: 16,072 km²
- Average High Temperatures: 16,5°C (January) to 45,5°C (July)
- Population: 922,072
- Capital City: Amarah
- Average Low Temperatures: 6,2°C (January) to 28,5°C (July)
- Population Distribution Rural-Urban: 27,6%-72,4%

Geography and Climate

The governorate of Missan is located in south-eastern Iraq on the border with Iran. The Al-Sheeb border crossing connects Missan with Iran. Missan shares internal boundaries with the governorates of Basrah, Thi-Qar and Wassit. The Tigris River runs through Missan and feeds the marshlands which once covered two thirds of the governorate. The marshland has shrunken drastically following the draining campaign of the 1990s, with much of the drained landscape turning into desert. After the 1991 Shiite uprising, which will be covered in more detail in the historical introduction section, the Ba'athist regime constructed a series of dams and canals aiming to drain the marshes, of which less than a quarter remain today. After the 2003 invasion the marshes have been partially reflooded.

Missan has a typical desert climate, with dry, hot summers and cooler winters. In summer high temperatures easily reach over 40°C. Rainfall is concentrated in the winter months and averages 177 mm yearly.

Population and Administrative Division

The governorate of Missan is divided into six districts: Ali Al-Gharbi, Al-Mejar Al-Kabir, Al-Maimouna, Al-Kahla, Amarah and Qal'at Saleh.

The majority of Missan's inhabitants follow the Shia branch of Islam. The governorate also hosts a Sunni minority and small communities of Christians and Mandeans, who are living in the city of Amarah. Arabs are the predominant ethnic group in the governorate, but a small group of Failli Kurds also lives in Missan. The marshlands of Missan form part of the ancestral homeland of the Ma'dan or Marsh Arabs, many of whom were displaced to other locations during the draining campaign. The Ma'dan inhabited the marshlands of Southern Iraq for centuries, living in reeds houses and practicing traditional methods of agriculture, fishing and water buffalo breeding. Tribal bonds and identity remain strong in the governorate.

Economy

The economy of Missan has long been based around agriculture. The productivity of Missan's agricultural sector has however suffered greatly from the destruction of the marshlands during the draining campaign. The Public Distribution System (PDS), a scheme of subsidized food, which was set in place in the 1990s, also inadvertently hurt Missan's farmers. The PDS greatly diminished the market value of wheat, Missan's main agricultural product, which turned many farmers' businesses unprofitable.

The governorate is an important industrial center, hosting a range of factories that are mainly producing construction materials like gravel and cement. The crumbling infrastructure and a lack of investment however are hindering industrial development. The Halfaya oilfield is located in Missan, and is being developed by a consortium headed by the China National Petroleum Corporation, which is owned by the Chinese government, the French Total and the Malaysian owned Petronas. Oil production started in 2012. The provincial capital Amarah also hosts the University of Misan.

The infrastructure of the governorate suffered from three decades of neglect during the rule of the Ba'ath party in Iraq. The UN sanctions imposed after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, which were only lifted after the 2003 invasion, also hit Missan's economy. Combat damage during the Iran-Iraq war and the 1991 Shia uprising further damaged the governorate's infrastructure. Sabotage and fighting after the 2003 invasion also hampered reconstruction and development efforts.

Historical Introduction

The governorate of Missan has a history stretching back to the conquests of Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC. More recently, Missan was a battlefield in the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988). During the last decades the governorate was characterized by conflict with the Ba'ath regime.

In 1980 the Iraqi army crossed the Shatt Al-Arab and invaded Iran. In 1983 Iran counterattacked and launched a massive assault targeting Amarah. Although the battle was inconclusive, both sides suffered thousands of casualties, and the border region with Iran remained a conflict zone for the rest of the war.

Following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, a US-led International Coalition intervened and crushed



The city of Amarah. Source: Iraq-Busniessnews

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 were killed in the fighting, including civilians who died when the Iraqi army indiscriminately targeted 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. Thousands of rebels and civilian IDPs sought refuge from the regime's persecution in the marshlands of southern Iraq. The Ba'ath regime however massacred many of the Marsh Arabs and drained up to 90% of the marshland, forcing

thousands of its inhabitants to flee to other regions in the governorate or neighboring Iran. The governorate's infrastructure, especially in the marshlands, suffered greatly.

The governorate of Missan remained relatively calm after the 2003 invasion. Similar to other southern governorates, Missan however did become a battleground of competing Shia factions. Various Shia factions, including Moqtada Al-Sadr's Sadrist Trend and its Mahdi Army militia, vied for power in the governorate. Iranian weapons and other support for the militias flowed across the border. Tribal identity and affiliation played an important role in this inter-Shia fighting, which often turned into armed confrontations. Shia militias also clashed with the American and British occupation forces and the new Iraqi security forces, which gradually lost control over the governorate.

In 2006 the Mahdi Army briefly took control over the governorate's capital of Amarah. Following similar operations in Basrah, the Iraqi army, supported by US forces, launched a major crackdown on the militias in Missan in summer 2008. After the 2008 operation and the resulting ceasefire, the government regained control over the governorate, which has remained relatively calm ever since. Calls for regional autonomy were heard in Missan, as well as in the other southern Shia dominated governorates, but they never reached critical momentum.

The 2014 takeover of large parts of Iraq by the Islamic State (IS) left Missan untouched.

Humanitarian Issues

During the past few years the security situation in Missan has remained relatively stable. Mines and unexploded ordnance, which are the legacy of the Iran-Iraq war and the crushed Shiite uprising, are however still littering areas on the border with Iran and in the marshlands.

	Population under the poverty line	Unemployment	Enrollment primary education	Enrollment secondary education	Literacy
Missan Governorate	16,4%	15,4%	75,8%	31,4%	69,2%
National Averages	11,5%	11,3%	90,4%	48,6%	79% ¹

Missan is one of the poorest governorates of Iraq. Both the percentage of the population living under the poverty line of \$2,5 a day, as well as the unemployment rates are higher than the national average. Moreover, poverty increased from 12,6% in 2007 to 16,4% in 2011. Poverty levels however vary greatly between the various districts of the governorate: 33,4% of the population in Al-Maimouna is living under the poverty line, which drops to 1% in the district of Qal'at Saleh. In contrast, food insecurity and the percentage of underweight children did decrease between 2007 and 2011.

¹As by UNICEF, *State of The World's Children 2015 Country Statistics Table*, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/iraq_statistics.html , 25/02/2015. All other data are from JAU, *Missan Governorate Profile* (2013), <http://www.jauiraq.org/documents/381/GP-Missan%202013.pdf> , 02/04/2015.

Concerning education Missan also scores significantly lower than the national average. Enrollment rates in primary and secondary education are lagging behind other areas in Iraq. Especially female enrollment rates (66,4% for primary education and 23,5% for secondary education) are staggeringly low. It should be noted that the enrollment rates have been increasing over the past few years.

88,3% of the inhabitants of Missan have sustainable access to an improved water source, which is higher than the national average of 86,8%. More than 80% of the households are connected to the public water network; however water availability is reported to be less than one hour a day. It is thus not surprising that only 5,6% of the population relies on the public network as their primary source of drinking water, with the majority also drawing water from other supplies like water tankers or surface water. 91,3% of Missan's inhabitants have access to improved sanitation, which is slightly below the national average. The sewer network is the main waste water disposal system for 60% of the population, but covered canals or other systems are also being used.

Less than one in four households in Missan relies solely on the public electricity network for its energy needs. Given that almost 80% of the people who are connected to the power network report daily power cuts of more than 12 hours, it is not a surprise that the majority of Missan's inhabitants (partially) relies on private or shared generators.

The governorate of Missan hosts a number of IDPs seeking refuge following the IS conquests in northwestern Iraq. The majority of these IDPs arrived from Ninewa following the 2014 IS conquests, with smaller numbers coming from Kirkuk and Salah Al-Din. Most of the IDPs seeking refuge in Missan are either Shia Arabs or members of the Turkmen and Shabak minorities. As in other regions of Iraq, the majority of IDPs in Missan are residing in rented housing or with the host community (family, friends or unrelated families) with a smaller group staying in schools. For an up to date overview of the numbers and locations of IDPs, refugees and camps in the governorate please consult [IOM's displacement tracking matrix](#) or [REACH Iraq's resource center](#).

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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