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## For Iraq, a Surge in Petty Crime Is a Victory, of Sorts

By [TIM ARANGO](#)  
Published: March 28, 2011

BAGHDAD — On a day when the prime minister of Turkey arrived to promote business ties between his country and [Iraq](#), a spate of attacks, including roadside bombings, jewelry heists and the slaughter of six women and a man in Mosul that may have been related to prostitution, rippled across the country.

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More than a dozen people — casualty figures are imprecise in the immediate aftermath of attacks and often change in the ensuing days — were killed.

The attacks, all unconnected, illustrate the changing complexion of violence in Iraq today: fewer large-scale, coordinated explosions that aim at innocent civilians, and an apparent increase in assassinations and robberies.

In a neighborhood in northeast Baghdad on Monday, three bombs went off outside a market and then gunmen stormed two jewelry shops, killing four people and wounding nine, a Ministry of Interior official said.

The gunmen made off with cash and jewelry, and the attack had the hallmark of previous ones that security officials believe were intended to raise money for insurgent groups. This year, a captured leader of an insurgent group, [Al Qaeda in Iraq](#), said in an interview on state television that a series of attacks on jewelers and goldsmiths last year were conducted to generate money to carry out attacks.

Even as the nature of violence changes, the threat of larger attacks by insurgent groups affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq, an umbrella organization that includes Al Qaeda in Iraq, and groups connected to the former government remains.

On the outskirts of Hilla, south of Baghdad, one person was killed by a bomb attached to a car, and two [improvised explosive devices](#) struck a joint Iraqi Army and police patrol, killing two and wounding three.

In the northern city of Mosul, six women and one man were killed after gunmen stormed a house. Neighbors suggested that the building had been used as a brothel, but police officials could not immediately confirm that.

Nevertheless, overall violence in Iraq has dropped sharply, especially since the height of the sectarian civil war in 2006 and 2007, but also compared with last year. In February, for example, 184 people were killed in attacks around the country, with the exception of the semiautonomous Kurdish region in the north, according to statistics from the Ministry of Interior. In February 2010, 435 were killed.

So while the daily thrum of smaller attacks goes on, the drop in violence has allowed a version of everyday life to blossom. A new Ferris wheel just opened in one of Baghdad's largest parks, rising above the blast walls, and on Sunday, the first day of the workweek here, it was packed with families. A fancy car dealership has sprung up in an upper-middle-class neighborhood, as have countless new restaurants and coffee shops.

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And high-level diplomacy has returned, not just in the form of the visit Monday by the Turkish leader, Prime Minister [Recep Tayyip Erdogan](#), but also in preparations for an [Arab League](#) summit meeting, which is scheduled to be held here in May.

Before the democratic uprisings across the Middle East, many worried that security in Iraq would force the meeting's cancellation.

Now, people worry about whether other Arab leaders will fear being overthrown if they leave their countries.

*Employees of The New York Times contributed reporting from Baghdad, Mosul, Kirkuk, Babel and Diyala.*

A version of this article appeared in print on March 29, 2011, on page A8 of the New York edition.

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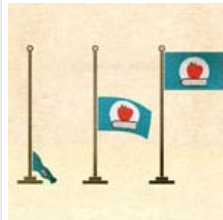
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