

## Ramadi City Profile

16th November 2007

*“Only a few months ago Ramadi was certainly the most dangerous place in Iraq. Today, to the astonishment of everyone it is perhaps the safest city in all of Iraq outside of Kurdistan”.*

Michael J Totton, journalist, 10/09/07

### Facts & figures

**Meaning:** Ramadi means “grey” in Arabic.

**Location:** 60 miles west of Baghdad, on the highway to Syria. Capital of Al-Anbar province.

**Population:** 445,000

**Ethnicity:** Arab, mostly of the Dulaym tribe

**Religion:** Sunni Muslim

### History

In comparison to many of the other cities of Iraq that can trace their history back thousands of years, Ramadi is a relatively new city. Ancient settlements existed in the vicinity, but it was not until 1869 that it was founded as a small town by the Ottoman Governor of Baghdad as a means to settle and control the nomadic tribes of the region.



In addition, it provided a stop-over on the east-west caravan routes through the Syrian Desert between Baghdad to the east and Damascus and Amman to the west. It is also on the north-south route of the Euphrates River.

During the First World War, the British attacked the Ottoman Empire at Basra and advanced up the Euphrates over the coming years. In 1917 they won an important victory over the Turks in Ramadi.

### Insurgency & Destruction

Ramadi, the capital of Sunni Anbar province had been the centre of the Sunni insurgency since 2003 when the US invaded Iraq. It was seen as the southwestern corner of the “Sunni triangle”. Such was the insurgents’ presence in Ramadi that they called it their capital. Even during 2006 the city was still in their hands such that they could parade down the main streets in their cars.



Not that the US army did not respond. From June 2006 onwards, having closed off the major entrances to the town, they attacked district by district. The house to house raids, aerial assaults and battles with insurgents have laid waste to Ramadi. Huge numbers of buildings were damaged or destroyed. Bullet marks are everywhere, and the only things that filled the streets were rubbish, rubble and wrecked cars. The people had gone or stayed inside. Like its name, a grey coat of dust had been left over everything in Ramadi.

In such a state as this, there was no functioning economy or government. The shops stayed shut and there were no real services, with little electricity, water supply or phone service.

The level of violence was unbelievable with an average of 30-35 attacks a day in early 2007. By April 2007 the destruction was so immense that Ramadi really did feel like a post war city.



This video taken by a US soldier driving through the town shows the level of destruction and desolation: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YW7zzQBJr-g>

## **Sunni Awakening**

By 2006, the actions of the al-Qaeda insurgents had become increasingly repressive. Kidnapping, beheading, extortion, intimidation, on top of challenging the power of the tribal leaders. These tribal leaders realised that al-Qaeda were more of an enemy than the US, and so in September 2006 started to form a movement of sheikhs (allied with the US against a common enemy) to drive out al-Qaeda from Anbar province. This movement was called the Awakening.



It is reported that from September 2006 up to April 2007 all the tribal leaders of Anbar province joined the Awakening. In May 2007 insurgent attacks had reduced from about 30-35 per day to less than 1 per day!



The tribal leaders decided that the best policy was to empower the local police and so sent large numbers of their tribes to sign up. The police served in their own communities and so knew who the enemies were. Some of these new policemen had been on the other side only a matter of weeks earlier. Now, however, the tribes had aligned with the US forces. In the summer of 2006 Ramadi had a reported 200 police officers. A year later there are as many as 6-8,000!

With the tribal leaders taking action, the attacks stopping and a functioning police force in place, life is starting to return to the grey city. Since the summer of 2007 people are returning to the streets, to the hundreds of shops and businesses that have reopened, as well as the schools. The town has a mayor and a functioning government.

By the autumn of 2007 the city was seen as stable, with building and reconstruction taking place. Electricity and water supply problems still need to be addressed.

In September 2007 the tribal leader who had brought the others together, Sheikh Abdul Sattar Abu Risha, was killed by an al-Qaeda bomb. His brother has taken his place leading the Awakening.

## **How to pray**

- Thank God for an end to most of the violence in Ramadi
- Pray for the protection and safety as the people of Ramadi seek to rebuild their city
- Pray that Ramadi would not longer be a "grey" city, but full of the life and colour that God gives
- Ramadi was founded to settle and control the local people. Pray that the city would be free of this founding spirit and discover their own future, guided by God
- Pray that the Sunni people of Ramadi would hear of the liberating love of Jesus and embrace Him as the Prince of Peace
- Pray for new communities of believers to be started in Ramadi



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