

Iranian military shells rebel positions in northern Iraq

Iranian artillery Tuesday shelled villages in northern Iraq where Iranian Kurdish rebels are believed to be operating, according to a local Iraqi Kurdish official.

The artillery shelled several villages in the area of Bashdar in Sulaymanyah province in Iraq's Kurdish Autonomous Region, the official said on condition of anonymity.

There were no casualties as the local population in the villages on the Iran-Iraq border had previously fled the area for fear of artillery shelling.

Iranian army artillery frequently shells villages in the mountains of Sulaymanyah where it says rebels from the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK) are based.

The PJAK is part of an alliance of Kurdish rebel groups, including the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The rebel alliance is engaged in an armed campaign in support of their demand for autonomy and rights for the Kurdish minorities in Iran and Turkey.

Kurdish rebel groups are believed to be operating from northern Iraq where Iraq's Kurds established an autonomous government, which is part of a federal Iraq.

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