Security conditions have decreased in Mosul and Salah al-Din and in the southern provinces due to revived militant attacks and election-related violence, respectively, from February 2 to 10. The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) is struggling to find a suitable force that can secure recaptured areas in eastern Mosul and free up elite units like the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) to launch operations in western Mosul. A February 6 report stated that the CTS “violently” prevented a hold force from carrying out door-to-door raids for fear of sectarian persecution. The inability to find a suitable hold force is also creating openings for ISIS to re-infiltrate, as shown by several attacks in eastern Mosul on February 8. The recent attacks also suggest that the neighborhoods were not fully cleared in initial operations. Continued poor security in eastern Mosul as the ISF begins operations in the west could allow ISIS to re-infiltrate the east and attack the ISF from the rear, forcing the ISF to fight on two fronts to recapture the city.

Security in northern Salah al-Din is deteriorating after an increase of militant activity around Tikrit and Dour District from February 2 to 10. The Salah al-Din Governor appealed to Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi on February 6 to intervene after a spike in activity around Dour District, southeast of Tikrit, and called on Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi to “take urgent measures to remedy the situation.” A Council of Representatives member stated that Dour District and surrounding areas suffered a “collapse of security since more than a month ago.” He added that there has been an exodus of families from the area because of the situation, including “terrorist gangs” burning their homes and giving death threats.

Meanwhile, recent attacks against members of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) in Basra and Maysan Provinces on February 8 and 9, respectively, are hints of political violence and intimidation tactics in the lead up to local elections, likely scheduled for April 2018. These attacks are common in every election cycle and will likely increase as Shi’a parties use their affiliated militias to vie for dominance in the majority-Shi’a southern provinces. If violence increases to an untenable level, the ISF may need to deploy forces to southern Iraq to contain militia and tribal violence at a time when the ISIS is stretched thin.