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## **FROM HEROES TO 'HEARTLESS' KILLERS - IRAQIS TURN FURY ON SECURITY FORCES**

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By MEE correspondent in Baghdad

Two years ago, Iraqs security forces were hailed as heroes for defeating Islamic State (IS), but now they are being vilified for their part in killing and maiming protesters across Iraq.

Tuesday was the second anniversary of Victory Day, marking Iraqs official defeat of IS and declared an annual national holiday by former Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi.

Thousands of civilians were murdered and abused at the hands of IS which, at its height, controlled almost one third of the country, and more than 67,300 war-related civilian deaths were documented, although many more went unrecorded.

"On the second anniversary of Iraq's victory over Daesh, we salute the Iraqi people, and honour our martyrs and injured soldiers. Their sacrifices made Iraqs victory possible, Iraq's beleaguered outgoing government wrote in a tweet, marking the anniversary of IS's defeat.

The day should have been cause for celebration but, two years later and in the middle of Iraqs current wave of civil unrest, the security forces formerly hailed as heroes are starting to lose the respect garnered during their hard-fought, four-year battle to defeat IS, which left an estimated 26,000 military personnel dead and a further 28,000 wounded.

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