



Iraq - Country Focus

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Country of Origin Information Report

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- Germany, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)
- Greece, Greek Asylum Service (GAS), General Secretariat for Migration Policy
- The Netherlands, Office for Country Information and Language Analysis, Ministry of Justice (OCILA)
- Slovak Republic, Department of Documentation and Foreign Cooperation, Ministry of Interior.

The review carried out by the mentioned departments contributes to the overall quality of the report, but it does not necessarily imply their formal endorsement of the final report, which is the full responsibility of the EUAA.





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Disclaimer

This report was written according to the [EUAA COI Report Methodology \(2023\)](#). The report is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced.

The information contained in this report has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care within a limited timeframe. However, this document does not claim to be exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular application for international protection. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

‘Refugee’, ‘risk’ and similar terminology are used as generic terminology and not in the legal sense as applied in the EU Asylum Acquis, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

Neither EUAA nor any person acting on its behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained in this report.

On 19 January 2022, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) became the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). All references to EASO, EASO products and bodies should be understood as references to the EUAA.

The drafting of this report was finalised on 8 May 2024. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this report. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the methodology section of the Introduction.





Glossary and abbreviations

| Term | Definition |
|-----------------------|---|
| AAH | Asaib Ahl al-Haq (The League of the Righteous) |
| <i>Asayish</i> | Internal security and intelligence services of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq |
| CSID | Civil Status Identification Card |
| EU+ countries | Member States of the European Union and associated countries |
| <i>Fasliya</i> | A practice of trading women/girls to settle tribal disputes |
| FGM/C | Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting |
| IDP | Internally Displaced Person |
| <i>Ikhbar</i> | A tribal procedure aimed at reporting a relative with perceived affiliation to ISIS |
| ISF | Iraqi Security Forces |
| ISIL | Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant; also known as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Islamic State (IS), or <i>Daesh</i> |
| KDP | Kurdistan Democratic Party |
| KH | Kataib Hezbollah. Iranian-backed Shia militia that is part of the Popular Mobilization Units |
| KRG | Kurdistan Regional Government |
| KRI | Kurdistan Region of Iraq |





| Term | Definition |
|---------------------------|--|
| KSF | Kurdish Security Forces |
| Member States | Member States of the European Union |
| <i>Mukhtar</i> | Local community leader |
| <i>Nahwa</i> | A tribal tradition where the cousin, uncle or other male relative of a girl can prohibit her marriage to a person outside of the family |
| PDS | Public Distribution System card for food assistance |
| PKK | Kurdistan Workers' Party |
| PMF | Popular Mobilisation Forces |
| PUK | Patriotic Union of Kurdistan |
| Refugee Convention | The 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 Protocol (referred to in EU asylum legislation and by the CJEU as 'the Geneva Convention') |
| <i>Tabriya</i> | A tribal procedure aimed at disowning a person, e.g., in cases of affiliation with ISIL |
| THB | Trafficking in human beings |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNAMI | United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq |
| UNID | Unified Identification Card |





Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide relevant information for the assessment of applications for international protection, including refugee status and subsidiary protection, and in particular for use in updating EUAA's country guidance document on Iraq. This report should be read in conjunction with the [EUAA COI report: Iraq – Security Situation \(May 2024\)](#).

The report provides information on the treatment of selected profiles by state and non-state actors as well as on key socio-economic indicators in the country, with specific focus on the cities of Baghdad and Sulaymaniyah. The reference period for the chapters related to Treatment of selected profiles is January 2022 – March 2024; the reference period for the chapters related to Key socio-economic indicators for Baghdad and Sulaymaniyah is February 2023 – March 2024.

The report is partly to be read as an update of the [EUAA COI report on Iraq: Targeting of Individuals](#) published in February 2022 and of the [EUAA COI report on Iraq: Key socio-economic indicators for Baghdad, Basrah and Sulaymaniyah](#) published in November 2021.

Methodology

This report was drafted by the EUAA and reviewed by EUAA and national COI departments in EU+ countries, as mentioned in the [Acknowledgements](#) section. This report is produced in line with the EUAA COI Report Methodology (2023)¹ and the EUAA COI Writing and Referencing Style Guide (2023).²

Defining the terms of reference

The terms of reference (ToR) of this report were defined by EUAA based on discussions held and input received from COI experts in the EUAA COI specialist network on Iraq and from policy experts of EU+ countries appointed to EUAA Country Guidance network. The ToR also built on previous EUAA COI reports on Iraq covering the same topics. The Terms of Reference for this report can be found in [Annex 2: Terms of Reference](#).

Collecting information

This report is based on information gathered from extensive desk research using predominantly public, specialised paper-based, and electronic sources as well as interviews with experts. All information from these sources was consulted within time constraints. Some limited additional information was added during the finalisation of this report in response to feedback received during the quality control process, until 7 May 2024.

¹ EUAA, EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology, February 2023, [url](#)

² EUAA, EUAA Writing and Referencing Guide for EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) Reports, February 2023, [url](#)





Quality control

To ensure that the authors respected the EUAA COI Report Methodology and that the Terms of Reference were comprehensively addressed, a review was carried out by COI specialists from the countries and organisations listed as reviewers in the [Acknowledgements](#) section. All comments made by the reviewers were taken into consideration and most of them were implemented in the final draft of this report, which was finalised on 8 May 2024. EUAA also performed the final quality review and editing of the text.

The review carried out by the mentioned departments, experts or organisations contributes to the overall quality of the report, but it does not necessarily imply their formal endorsement of the final report, which is the full responsibility of EUAA.

Sources

In accordance with the EUAA COI Report Methodology, the content of this report relies on a range of different open-source material, as well as interviews and email communication with oral sources. Information was mainly gathered from public reports by international organisations; reports produced by various bodies of the United Nations; civil society, advocacy groups, humanitarian organisations, and NGOs; COI reports of national asylum administrations; media, specialised academic publications and think tanks. In addition to using publicly available documentary sources, interviews with experts were conducted in order to supplement information gaps and/or to further corroborate some information. The chapters related to entry, residency requirements and access to civil documentation and services extensively rely on information provided by UNHCR. Some oral sources interviewed by the EUAA preferred to remain anonymous for security reasons. Sources were assessed for their background, publication history, reputability, and current knowledge of the situation on the ground. All the public and oral sources referenced in this report are cited and described in [Annex 1: Bibliography](#).

Structure and use of the report

The report comprises two main chapters, each focusing on the treatment of selected profiles and on key socio-economic indicators for Baghdad and Sulaymaniyah respectively. Chapter 1 is divided into six sub-chapters. Each sub-chapter contains information on the general situation of selected groups of individuals or profiles within the Iraqi society as well as their treatment by state, state-affiliated actors and non-state actors. For better readability, cross-links among the sub-chapters of the report are provided where information regarding one or more profiles overlaps with information related to other profiles covered in this report. Chapter 2 is divided in three sub-chapters. The first gives an overview of the socio-economic situation in the country as well as an overview at country level of the requirements needed to enter and settle in some governorates/cities, and the requirements needed to access civil documentation and services. The following two sub-chapters contain the same information specifically for the cities of Baghdad and Sulaymaniyah, respectively.





1. Treatment of selected profiles

1.1. Individuals perceived as opposing the state and state-affiliated actors

Article 38 of the 2005 Iraqi Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, press, printing, advertisement, media and publication, freedom of assembly and peaceful demonstration, ‘in a way that does not violate public order and morality’.⁴ Despite such provisions, some laws inherited from the previous era and still in force in Iraq are used by authorities to restrict these same rights.⁵ Sources noted that Article 226 of the Penal Code,⁶ in particular, has been used by Iraqi authorities to suppress dissent and critical voices in the country.⁷ Civil society organisations stated that it is unclear what can be deemed as an ‘insult’ against authorities, as stipulated in the aforementioned article⁸ and that the ‘broad and vague language’ used in the Penal Code allows Iraqi authorities to target activists for their opinions.⁹ Sarah Sanbar, Iraq researcher at Human Rights Watch, observed that those who ‘insult’ Iraqi or Kurdish authorities continue to face ‘serious repercussions, including arrest, harassment, kidnapping, arbitrary detention, and death threats, from both state and non-state actors.’¹⁰ Notable recent cases include the arrest of Ali Al Abadi, president of the Iraq Center for Human Rights, in December 2023, for insult and defamation, as well as the arrest of political analyst Mohammed Na’na Hassan, for insulting the Prime Minister Al Sudani on TV. Journalist Islam Kashani was also arrested for criticising corruption in the KRG.¹¹

In November 2022, the Iraqi government introduced a draft law on Cybercrime foreseeing penalties ranging from seven to ten years of prison and fines of at least 10 million Iraqi dinars for anyone using cyberspace ‘with the intention to undermine religious, family or social values and principles’.¹² The draft law further foresees that anyone found guilty of publishing online content ‘undermining the country’s independence, unity, and safety, or its supreme economic, political, military, or security interests can be sentenced to life imprisonment and a fine of up

⁴ Article 38 reads: ‘The State shall guarantee in a way that does not violate public order and morality: A. Freedom of expression using all means. B. Freedom of press, printing, advertisement, media and publication. C. Freedom of assembly and peaceful demonstration, and this shall be regulated by law.’ Iraq, Constitution of the Republic of Iraq, 15 October 2005, [url](#), Art. 38

⁵ UNDP, Media landscape in Iraq, 5 February 2024, [url](#), p. 8

⁶ Article 226 reads: ‘Any person who publicly insults the National Assembly or the government or the courts or the armed forces or any other constitutional body or the public authorities or official or 1 semiofficial agencies or departments is punishable by a term of imprisonment not exceeding 7 years or detention or a fine.’ Iraq, Iraqi Penal Code (Law No. 111 of 1969), 1969, [url](#), Art. 226

⁷ Mansour R., Tackling Iraq’s unaccountable state, Chatham House, 11 December 2023, [url](#); Al Kaabi A., Knights M., Iraq’s “Resistance” Factions Shift to Major Crackdown on Media Spaces, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 28 February 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, The long shadow of Saddam’s dictatorship in Iraq, 16 April 2023, [url](#)

⁸ Mansour R., Tackling Iraq’s unaccountable state in Chatham House, 11 December 2023, [url](#)

⁹ Al Jazeera, The long shadow of Saddam’s dictatorship in Iraq, 16 April 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰ Sanbar S., email communication with EUAA, 16 March 2024

¹¹ Sanbar S., email communication with EUAA, 16 March 2024

¹² RSF, Draconian bills resubmitted to Iraqi parliament, 20 December 2022, [url](#)



to 50 million Iraqi dinars.¹³ In a study published in February 2024, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reported that the approval of the draft law has been suspended due to the opposition.¹⁴

In May 2023, Parliament held a second reading of a proposed law on Freedom of Expression and Peaceful Assembly. The draft law prohibits the undermining of ‘religions, religious beliefs, sects’. Under the proposed law, gatherings are allowed only upon prior permission from the authorities, obtained at least five days in advance.¹⁵ Both draft laws raised significant criticism among international organisations and civil society groups due to the alleged risk of restricting freedom of expression by imposing imprisonment and fines.¹⁶

In an article published in March 2024 by The New Arab, a member of the Iraqi Parliament reported that the Coordination Framework was willing to pass the law.¹⁷ A new Regulation (No. 1 of 2023) for Digital Content¹⁸ was proposed on 16 March 2023. Such regulation, if passed, would allow authorities to remove online content, impose fines on content providers and issue criminal penalties against internet users.¹⁹ The provision drew criticism among civil society organisations, warning of ‘serious implications’ on the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and restrictions of freedoms within the online civic space in Iraq.²⁰

1.1.1. Members of political opposition parties, political and human rights activists, protesters

Members of political opposition parties

Various sources reported that cases of violence towards political opponents by unidentified armed actors, Iran-backed militias, and groups linked to Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) occurred in both Federal Iraq and in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).²¹

¹³ AI, Iraq: Draft laws threaten rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, 18 July 2023, [url](#); RSF, Iraq, accessed 12 March 2024, [url](#); USCIRF, Country Update Iraq, September 2023, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁴ UNDP, Media landscape in Iraq, 5 February 2024, [url](#), p. 8

¹⁵ AI, Iraq: Draft laws threaten rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, 18 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶ IOHR, Press release regarding the draft law on freedom of expression and peaceful demonstration, 13 April 2023, [url](#); ICSSI, The draft law on freedom of expression, assembly, and peaceful protest threatens to further restrict constitutionally guaranteed democratic rights in Iraq, 13 April 2023, [url](#); AI, Iraq: Draft laws threaten rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, 18 July 2023, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2023, Iraq, 4 October 2023, [url](#); New York Times (The), As Iraq Tries to Chill Critics, Its Newest Target Is Social Media, 16 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷ New Arab (The), Iraqi and Kurdish authorities under fire for ‘restricting freedom of expression’, 4 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸ Knights M., Iraqi CMC Draft Regulation on Digital Content in Iraq, in: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 16 May 2023, [url](#)

¹⁹ Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2023, Iraq, 4 October 2023, [url](#); Knights M. et al., Iraq’s New Regime Change: How Tehran-Backed Terrorist Organizations and Militias Captured the Iraqi State in: CTC Sentinel, December 2023, Volume 16, Issue 11, [url](#)

²⁰ Article 19, Iraq: Drop draft digital content legislation and protect free speech online, 16 March 2023, [url](#)

²¹ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 5; Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#); IOHR, Threats and attacks against members of Parliament (MPs) who do not belong to influential forces, 2 August 2023, [url](#)



During the reference period of this report, political activists faced arrests and harassment for statements critical of authorities,²² militias and Iran,²³ with the aforementioned Article 226 of the Penal Code being widely used against critics of Al Sudani's government.²⁴ Amnesty International (AI) also noted that persons expressing political criticism continued to be criminally prosecuted in Iraq.²⁵ For instance, in December 2022, activist Haidar al-Zaidi was sentenced to three years of prison under Article 226 of the Iraqi Penal Code for having published a tweet expressing criticism over a deceased head of the PMF. Human rights activists in Baghdad accused the PMF to be responsible for the arrest,²⁶ considering the judicial decision as 'an alarming escalation of legal threats against civil society'.²⁷ Al-Zaidi was eventually released and the charges against him dropped.²⁸ In February 2022, Ali Akram Al-Bayati, a prominent human rights defender and member of Iraq's High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR), received a defamation legal complaint because of his investigation on allegations of torture of detainees.²⁹ The United Nations Committee Against Torture (UN CAT) underlined 'the lack of protection and immunity of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights' (IHCHR) members from retaliations and other types of intimidation while carrying out their official duties.³⁰

In the KRI, some rival politicians were targeted and silenced.³¹ For instance, activities of the New Generation Party and its affiliated media outlet, Nalia Radio and Television (NRT), were reportedly repressed in the KRI.³² In August 2022, security forces arrested deputy members of an opposition Kurdish party that called for a public protest against the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and accused the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) of corruption.³³

Activists and protesters

In the KRI, mosque preachers have been arrested by Kurdish authorities for criticising the ruling regime over lack of provision of basic services.³⁴ KRG-security forces arbitrarily arrested and prosecuted activists and perceived critics.³⁵ Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and PUK, each one with its security apparatus, repressed dissidents, and peaceful protesters. A climate of fear is reported by activists, both in Federal Iraq and in the KRI, resulting in self-censorship. Cases of ordinary citizens, unfamiliar with activism, being arrested for posting online content critical of authorities, were reported in 2022. According to Freedom House, these cases

²² HRW, World Report 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); Foreign Policy, Iraq's Prime Minister Is Silencing Human Rights Advocates, 2 June 2022, [url](#)

²³ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 17

²⁴ Al Kaabi A., Knights M., Iraq's "Resistance" Factions Shift to Major Crackdown on Media Spaces, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

²⁵ AI, Iraq: Government must match rhetoric on human rights with meaningful action, 15 March 2023, [url](#)

²⁶ HRW, Iraq: Activist Imprisoned for Peaceful Criticism of Security Forces, 6 December 2022, [url](#); BBC, Iraqi activist jailed over tweet 'insulting' Iran-backed militia force, 7 December 2022, [url](#)

²⁷ New Arab (The), HRW condemns sentencing Iraqi activist for three years over a Twitter post, 7 December 2022, [url](#)

²⁸ AI, Iraq: Open Letter to Prime Minister Al-Sudani: End Iraq's Reign of Impunity, 15 March 2023, [url](#)

²⁹ HRW, Drop Complaint Against Iraq Human Rights Commission Member, 10 March 2022, [url](#); Foreign Policy, Iraq's Prime Minister Is Silencing Human Rights Advocates, 2 June 2022, [url](#)

³⁰ UN CAT, Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Iraq *, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para.40

³¹ HRW, World Report 2024 Iraq, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

³² Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

³³ BTI, 2024 Country Report, [url](#), p. 11

³⁴ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

³⁵ AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)



supposedly indicate authorities' capacity to monitor social media.³⁶ Environmental activists also faced death threats, violence, intimidation and arbitrary detention by government officials and armed groups.³⁷

The Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR),³⁸ in September 2022, reported that a great number of peaceful demonstrators faced abduction and torture by non-state armed actors.³⁹ In its report on accountability in Iraq published in June 2022, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) highlighted a persistent climate of fear and intimidation due to the impunity of targeted killings of protesters by unidentified armed elements. According to the source, several activists had to relocate, including outside of Iraq, due to security reasons.⁴⁰ Violent repression of protesters and arrests of journalists covering protests continued in 2023.⁴¹ In an article published in December 2023, Renad Mansour, a senior research fellow and project director of the Iraq Initiative at Chatham House, noted that the 'elite power' relies on security and judicial authorities to curb freedom of expression and protest, also by issuing arrest warrants to individuals being perceived as a threat.⁴² Kidnapping, disappearance and killings were also used by militias to target protesters.⁴³

In July 2022, after months of political deadlock following the October 2021 election, supporters of Muqtada Al-Sadr⁴⁴ prevented the functioning of Parliament for several months as a sign of prolonged protest, after the resignation of 73 legislators of the Sadrist Movement.⁴⁵ In August 2022, protests turned into violent clashes between Al-Sadr's militias, named Peace Brigades, and members of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). BBC reported that 'at least' 23 Al-Sadr's supporters were killed.⁴⁶ The UN documented 46 deaths and 300 injuries as a result of the clashes, which occurred in Baghdad on 29 and 30 August 2022.⁴⁷ Fighting stopped only after Al-Sadr's call to withdraw from the Green Zone and to end the protest,⁴⁸ clearing the way for the formation of a Coordination Framework-backed government in October 2022.⁴⁹

³⁶ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

³⁷ HRW, Iraq: Environmentalists Face Retaliation, 23 February 2023, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, UN Human Rights Chief ends visit to Iraq, Statement, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 9 August 2023, [url](#)

³⁸ The GCHR is a Lebanon-based NGO, which documents the situation of human rights defenders in the Gulf region and neighbouring countries since 2011, see GCHR, webpage, [url](#)

³⁹ GCHR, Patterns of Torture in Iraq, A Report by the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR), September 2022, [url](#), p. 12

⁴⁰ UNAMI/OHCHR, Update on Accountability in Iraq, Limited progress towards justice for human rights violations and abuses by 'Unidentified Armed Elements', June 2022, [url](#), pp. 10, 11

⁴¹ HRW, World Report 2024 Iraq, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴² Mansour R., Tackling Iraq's unaccountable state in: Chatham House, 11 December 2023, [url](#)

⁴³ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 4-5

⁴⁴ Muqtada al-Sadr is an influential Shia cleric, for more information see Reuters, Who is the Iraqi Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr?, 20 July 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁶ BBC, Iraq: At least 23 dead amid fighting after Moqtada al-Sadr quits, 30 August 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷ UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2631 (2022)

Report of the Secretary-General, 26 September 2022, [url](#), para.19

⁴⁸ BBC, Iraq: Tense calm in Baghdad after cleric issues appeal, [url](#), 30 August 2022

⁴⁹ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)



Arrests of activists and politicians by security forces took place in August 2022, on occasion of a pre-announced protest in Sulaymaniyah, Erbil and Dohuk.⁵⁰ In September 2023, security forces opened fire against protesters in Kirkuk leading to the death of four persons and injuring of 16 persons.⁵¹ In the KRI, authorities linked both to the KDP and the PUK, continued to restrict the possibility for protesters to gather,⁵² arbitrarily arresting, prosecuting and imprisoning activists, journalists and individuals perceived as critics.⁵³ Security forces, including the Iraqi Security Forces, Federal Police, Popular Mobilisation Forces, and some units of Kurdistan Regional Government *Asayish* internal security services, reportedly acted with impunity, arresting suspects without any guarantees.⁵⁴

During a visit held in Baghdad in August 2023, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights raised concerns about the increasing restriction of civic space, calling on the Iraqi government to protect journalists, activists and human rights defenders from intimidation and interference.⁵⁵ As of February 2024, it is reported that Iran-backed militias targeted ‘unarmed activists’ and anti-corruption commentators.⁵⁶

Online activists

According to Michael Knights, since the 2019 Tishreen October protests’ movement, the Iraqi government and the PMF, focused on the control of online communities.⁵⁷ In January 2023, the Ministry of the Interior launched an online platform called ‘Ballegh’ to enable the public to submit complaints over so-called ‘derogatory or degrading’ online content.⁵⁸ The Ministry’s decision is based on Article 403⁵⁹ of the Iraqi Penal Code.⁶⁰ In the same month, the Iraqi government established a Committee to punish individuals being reported through such a platform.⁶¹ See also [1.6 Individuals perceived as transgressing moral and religious norms](#). As of July 2023, the

⁵⁰ AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World’s Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#); Australia, DFAT, Country Information Report: Iraq, 16 January 2023, [url](#), p. 26; USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 13

⁵¹ HRW, Iraq: Security Forces Open Fire on Kirkuk Protesters, 8 September 2023, [url](#)

⁵² Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

⁵³ AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World’s Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁴ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 3, 7, 11, 12

⁵⁵ UNSC, Implementation of Resolution 2682 (2023): Report of the Secretary-General, S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 54

⁵⁶ Al Kaabi A., Knights M., Iraq’s “Resistance” Factions Shift to Major Crackdown on Media Spaces, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁷ Knights M. et al., Iraq’s New Regime Change: How Tehran-Backed Terrorist Organizations and Militias Captured the Iraqi State in: CTC December 2023, Volume 16, Issue 11, [url](#)

⁵⁸ UNSC, Implementation of Resolution 2631 (2022): Report of the Secretary-General, S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 54; SMEX, Iraq’s Controversial “Ballegh” Platform for “Combating Indecent Content”, 15 February 2023, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom on the Net; Iraq, 4 October 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁹ Article 403 reads: ‘Any person who produces, imports, publishes, possesses, obtains or translates a book, printed or other written material, drawing, picture, film, symbol or other thing that violates the public integrity or decency with intent to exploit or distribute such material is punishable by a period of detention not exceeding 2 years plus a fine not exceeding 200 dinars or by one of those penalties. The same penalty applies to any person who advertises such material or displays it in public or sells, hires or offers it for sale or hire even though it is not in public or to any person who distributes or submits it for distribution by any means. If the offence is committed with intent to deprave, it is considered to be an aggravating circumstances.’ Iraq, Iraqi Penal Code (Law No. 111 of 1969), 1969, [url](#), Art. 403

⁶⁰ SMEX, Iraq’s Controversial “Ballegh” Platform for “Combating Indecent Content”, 15 February 2023, [url](#)

⁶¹ Shafaq News, Iraqi Interior Ministry imposes restrictions on social media users, 14 February 2023, [url](#); SMEX, Iraq’s Controversial “Ballegh” Platform for “Combating Indecent Content”, 15 February 2023, [url](#); AI, Iraq: Government must match rhetoric on human rights with meaningful action, 15 March 2023, [url](#)



head of the Committee declared to have received more than 150 000 complaints. Of those, 14 people were charged for publishing ‘indecent’ or ‘immoral’ content on social media.⁶²

The definition of ‘indecent content’ drew criticism among civil society activists who highlighted the unclarity of the term, thus exposing activists posting online to arbitrary arrests⁶³ and self-censorship.⁶⁴ Between May and September 2023, UNAMI acknowledged the issue of self-censorship in social media and held talks with judiciary authorities about charges against journalists and civil society activists.⁶⁵

Sarah Sanbar, Iraq researcher at Human Rights Watch, informed EUAA that the Ballegh platform was taken down a few months after its launch and it remained locked at the time of finalising this report.⁶⁶ The monitoring campaign does not appear to be implemented in a systematic way.⁶⁷ In an interview with SMEX, a non-profit organisation advocating for human rights in digital space, Hayder Hamzoz, the executive director of the Iraqi Network for Social Media (INSM), reported that the purpose of the Ballegh Platform is ‘to instil fear in bloggers criticising the constant political failures in Iraq’.⁶⁸ Judicial authorities expressed support to the Ministry of Interior for such initiative through a letter issued by the Supreme Judicial Council calling all courts and departments of the judiciary to prosecute individuals for ‘insulting state institutions’.⁶⁹

October 2019 Tishreen movement

In early October 2019, mass protests -commonly referred as Tishreen movement- erupted in multiple governorates across Iraq demanding systemic political reforms.⁷⁰ Protests were reportedly met with use of excessive force by security forces, resulting in death, injuries,⁷¹ extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances.⁷²

In its Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Iraq, published in June 2022, UN CAT highlighted that only a small number of prosecutions have been undertaken to address the allegations of the excessive use of force, both by security forces and by unidentified armed actors, occurred during October 2019 Tishreen movement.⁷³ Legal accountability for the killing and disappearance of hundreds of protesters, including for the high-profile ones, had not been achieved.⁷⁴

⁶² New York Times (The), As Iraq Tries to Chill Critics, Its Newest Target Is Social Media, 16 July 2023, [url](#)

⁶³ Mansour R., Tackling Iraq’s unaccountable state in Chatham House, 11 December 2023, [url](#); UNSC, Implementation of Resolution 2631 (2022): Report of the Secretary-General, S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 54;

⁶⁴ UNSC, Implementation of Resolution 2631 (2022): Report of the Secretary-General, S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 54; AI, Iraq: Joint statement: Iraqi authorities must cease chilling crackdown on free speech, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁵ UNSC, Implementation of Resolution 2682 (2023): Report of the Secretary-General, S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 57

⁶⁶ Sanbar S., email communication with EUAA, 16 March 2024

⁶⁷ Sanbar S., email communication with EUAA, 16 March 2024

⁶⁸ SMEX, Iraq’s Controversial “Ballegh” Platform for “Combating Indecent Content”, 15 February 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁹ Al Jazeera, The long shadow of Saddam’s dictatorship in Iraq, 16 April 2023, [url](#); Chatham House, Tackling Iraq’s unaccountable state, 11 December 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁰ EPIC, The Long Game: Iraq’s “Tishreen” Movement and the Struggle for Reform, October 2021, [url](#)

⁷¹ HRW, Four Years On, Peaceful Iraqi Protesters Remain Missing, 2 October 2023, [url](#)

⁷² AI, Iraq: Four years after Tishreen protests, no justice for state and militia violence, 27 September 2023, [url](#)

⁷³ UN CAT, Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Iraq*, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 32

⁷⁴ HRW, World Report 2024, Annual report on the human rights situation in 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)



GCHR reported that, in October 2022, security forces searched the home of activists in the governorates of Baghdad, Babil, Najaf, Thi-Qar and Basrah, days before the demonstrations aimed to commemorate the October 2019 Tishreen movement, to prevent them from participating in the demonstrations.⁷⁵ On 1 October 2023, security forces dispersed the demonstration for the commemoration of the fourth anniversary of the October 2019 protests. GCHR reported on the killing of a prominent activist on 14 October 2023 who took part in the October 2019 protests.⁷⁶ For more information on the Tishreen movement, see [EUAA COI Iraq Security Situation Report – January 2022](#).

1.1.2. Journalists and media workers

Reporters sans frontières (RSF) ranked Iraq 167th out of 180 countries in its World Press Freedom Index 2023,⁷⁷ due ‘in particular to the large number of journalists who are missing or held hostage’.⁷⁸ Anti-defamation crimes included in the Penal Code are often used to threaten, punish and intimidate journalists and internet users⁷⁹ and a ‘considerable’ number of Iraqi journalists faced legal proceedings.⁸⁰ Vaguely worded laws have been used to target and silence journalists, activists, and rival politicians, including in the KRI.⁸¹ Human Rights Watch researcher Sarah Sanbar said that journalists or those with large social media followers perceived to ‘insult’ Iraqi or Kurdish authorities continue to face ‘serious repercussions, including arrest, harassment, kidnapping, arbitrary detention, and death threats, from both state and non-state actors.’⁸² Journalists and online media outlets writing on corruption were particularly targeted, including with cyberattacks.⁸³

In the KRI it included arbitrary arrests, prosecution and imprisonment of journalists,⁸⁴ especially local⁸⁵ and independent reporters.⁸⁶ In August 2022, dozens of journalists and activists were arrested prior to a planned protest aimed at expressing grievances towards the KRG,⁸⁷ against

⁷⁵ GCHR, GCHR’s 25th Periodic Report on Human Rights Violations in Iraq, 16 December 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁶ GCHR, GCHR’s 30th Periodic Report on Human Rights Violations in Iraq, 9 November 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁷ RSF, 2023 World Press Freedom Index, [url](#)

⁷⁸ RSF, 2023 World Press Freedom Index – journalism threatened by fake content industry, [url](#)

⁷⁹ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#); UN Iraq, Press release, International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, 2 November 2022, [url](#); AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World’s Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#); UNDP, Media landscape in Iraq, 5 February 2024, [url](#), p. 24; CPJ, Iraqi Kurdish journalist Omed Baroshky charged with defamation over Facebook post, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰ IOHR, Press freedom in Iraq: two decades of bloodshed and impunity; 3 May 2023, [url](#)

⁸¹ SMEX, Iraq’s Controversial “Ballegh” Platform for “Combating Indecent Content”, 15 February 2023, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom on the Net: Iraq, 4 October 2023, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

⁸² Sanbar S., email communication with EUAA, 16 March 2024

⁸³ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁴ AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World’s Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#); AI, Journalist Released After Three Years’ Imprisonment; Outcome UA: 28/21 [MDE 14/7732/2024], 26 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁵ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#); Marif D., Barzani’s Failures on Freedom of Expression in Iraqi Kurdistan in: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 24 August 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁶ Columbia Journalism Review, ‘A kind of hell for journalists’, 6 April 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁷ HRW, World Report 2023, Iraq, [url](#)



corruption, poverty and unemployment.⁸⁸ In some cases, journalists in the KRI were detained with accusations of espionage.⁸⁹

RSF observed that many journalists in Iraq were subjected to constant threats since the October 2019 Tishreen movement.⁹⁰ In its report covering the period from May 2022 until May 2023, the Iraqi Observatory for Human Rights (IOHR) noted that journalists are obliged to work in a dangerous environment, them being ‘a common target for all conflicting parties in Iraq’.⁹¹

Self-censorship is said to be widely spread in Iraq and in the KRI due to the risk of criminal penalties, retaliation by government authorities, political parties, and armed groups.⁹² Freedom House observed that in the period between June 2022 and May 2023, authorities launched ‘a crackdown on social media users’, restricting internet freedom in both Federal Iraq and the KRI. Security forces arrested some internet users for their online content, including journalists, activists, and social media users who were targeted and physically assaulted.⁹³ These violations, which have created an environment of fear, have forced many Iraqi citizens to self-censor,⁹⁴ and others, particularly reporters, to leave the country.⁹⁵ Journalists are also led to self-censor due to death threats and abduction, targeting also less prominent journalists.⁹⁶ In an interview with Chatham House, an Iraqi journalist reported to have been advised by human rights defenders to ‘spend most of his time’ in the KRI or to stay under cover when in Baghdad due to his critical articles about armed groups. The journalist also added that many colleagues fear criticising armed groups in their reporting.⁹⁷ Female journalists are particularly subject to discrimination, harassment and extortion, especially those working on controversial issues for independent media.⁹⁸

IOHR noted that, during clashes in Baghdad in August 2022 among the Al-Sadr affiliated Peace Brigades (also called Saraya Al-Salam), members of the PMF, and armed groups affiliated with other political parties - journalists considered as ‘enemies’ were directly targeted by all the conflicting parties.⁹⁹ During the protest that took place in July 2023 in Baghdad in front of the Swedish Embassy, several journalists were arrested by security forces.¹⁰⁰ Human Rights Watch also reported cases of shooting by security forces against reporters during protests in Kirkuk.¹⁰¹

⁸⁸ HRW, Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Arrests to Deter Protest, 28 August 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁹ RSF, Iraq, accessed 12 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰ RSF, Iraq, 2022, accessed 12 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹¹ IOHR, Press freedom in Iraq: two decades of bloodshed and impunity, 3 May 2023, [url](#)

⁹² Freedom House, Report on digital media and internet freedom (reporting period June 2022 - May 2023), 4 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹³ Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2023, Iraq, 4 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁴ Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2023, Iraq, 4 October 2023, [url](#); UNSC, Implementation of Resolution 2682 (2023): Report of the Secretary-General, S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 57

⁹⁵ Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2023, Iraq, 4 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁶ RSF, Iraq, accessed 17 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁷ Mansour R., Tackling Iraq’s unaccountable state in: Chatham House, 11 December 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁸ UNDP, Media landscape in Iraq, 5 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 20-21

⁹⁹ IOHR, Press freedom in Iraq: two decades of bloodshed and impunity, 3 May 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ CNN, Protesters storm Swedish embassy in Iraq over Quran burning plan, 20 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ HRW, World Report 2024 Iraq, 11 January 2024, [url](#); HRW, Iraq: Security Forces Open Fire on Kirkuk Protesters, 8 September 2023, [url](#)



Violent repression of protesters and arrests of journalists covering protests continued in 2023¹⁰² as reporters were in some cases physically assaulted and detained for covering demonstrations or other events.¹⁰³ As the media are particularly intertwined with politics in both Federal Iraq and in KRI,¹⁰⁴ employees of media outlets are also targeted based on the political affiliation of their employers.¹⁰⁵ Some media outlets have been subjected to politically motivated attacks¹⁰⁶ and programmes have been suspended if perceived to be critical of authorities.¹⁰⁷

Freedom House reported that ‘militias frequently shoot, kidnap, torture, and assassinate journalists for their work.’ The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) did not record any murder of journalists in Iraq within the reference period of this report.¹⁰⁸ RSF highlighted that the killing of journalists remains unpunished.¹⁰⁹ The weak response of the state is considered as a contributing factor to the rise of violence against journalists.¹¹⁰

1.1.3. Individuals with (perceived) affiliation to ISIL

Perceived affiliation to ISIL is mainly driven by family connections through a relative, even a distant family member,¹¹¹ actively involved with ISIL. The so-called ‘ISIL-families’¹¹² is a broad definition including: persons with no connection to ISIL;¹¹³ a minority of persons ideologically attached to the group; ISIL-affiliated families returning to their original communities who undergo a reintegration process.¹¹⁴ Identification of ISIL affiliation has been based on the mere suspicion about a relative being an ISIL supporter, in absence of any evidence¹¹⁵ or any formal charges.¹¹⁶ Perceived ISIL affiliation encompasses also first and second degree relatives, even up to the fourth-degree in some communities,¹¹⁷ including children cleared of any involvement

¹⁰² HRW, World Report 2024 Iraq, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰³ UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, IRAQ - International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, 2 November 2022, Press release, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴ RSF, Iraq, accessed 17 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 28 7

¹⁰⁶ UN Iraq, Press release, International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, 2 November 2022, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom on the Net, 4 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷ UN Iraq, Press release, International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, 2 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸ CPJ, Explore CPJ’s database of attacks on the press – Iraq, n.d., (filtered by dates from 2022 to 2024), [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ RSF, Iraq, accessed 17 March 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁰ IOHR, Press freedom in Iraq: two decades of bloodshed and impunity; 3 May 2023, [url](#)

¹¹¹ UNDP, Challenges for the Return and Reintegration of Women and Children, October 2022, [url](#), p. 16

¹¹² HRW, Iraq’s So-Called “ISIS Families”: Rounded up, Vilified, Forgotten, 14 November 2018, [url](#); for additional information on the categorisation of so called ‘ISIL families’ see New Lines (The), ISIS in Iraq: The Challenge of Reintegrating ‘ISIS Families’, 7 July 2020, [url](#)

¹¹³ Peacemakers Network, Iraq after the Territorial Defeat of Islamic State, March 2023, [url](#), p. 23

¹¹⁴ Cook, J., Distinguishing Children From ISIS-Affiliated Families in Iraq and Their Unique Barriers for Rehabilitation and Reintegration in: Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume XVII, Issue 3, September 2023, [url](#), p. 51

¹¹⁵ UNDP, Challenges for the Return and Reintegration of Women and Children, October 2022, [url](#), p. 16

¹¹⁶ Cook, J., Distinguishing Children From ISIS-Affiliated Families in Iraq and Their Unique Barriers for Rehabilitation and Reintegration in: Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume XVII, Issue 3, September 2023, [url](#), p. 51

¹¹⁷ World Bank, Local Peace Agreements and the Return of IDPs with Perceived ISIL Affiliation in Iraq, January 2022, [url](#), p. 5., see also, UN Women, Zainab Qassim, an Iraqi Woman Mediator who Helped Reintegrate Families Accused of ISIS Affiliation into their Home Communities, 24 October 2022, [url](#)





in ISIL crimes.¹¹⁸ Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within Iraq and families returning from Al Hol camp in Syria have been perceived as ISIL's affiliated.¹¹⁹

Since 2016, Iraqi civil and security apparatuses have reportedly targeted thousands of individuals with perceived affiliation to ISIL, leading to what has been referred by Amnesty International (AI) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as a 'collective punishment' in various ways.¹²⁰ For example, individuals with perceived affiliation to ISIL were reportedly prevented from accessing civil documents necessary to access basic services and were restricted their freedom of movement.¹²¹ Lack of acceptance by community, stigmatisation, violence and a heightened risk of revenge attacks were reported.¹²²

Government discriminatory practices and social stigma are considered among the root causes which hindered the possibility for individuals perceived to be affiliated to ISIL to reintegrate into society.¹²³

Based on a focus group conducted in December 2022 by Action against Hunger in five districts in Ninewa, Sunnis reported being singled out for discrimination for being perceived as ISIL supporters in Tel Afar.¹²⁴ Families from Sunni-majority areas are reported to fear being 'collectively stigmatized'.¹²⁵ Sunnis who lived in areas under ISIL's rule have been accused of ISIL's affiliation by PMF, irrespective of their degree of involvement with the group. In Tel Afar, PMF harassed Sunnis perceived to be affiliated to ISIL at checkpoints.¹²⁶ The suspicion of being ISIL-affiliated by both security actors and by the communities¹²⁷ might increase for a Sunni who did not return to the place of origin for a long period of time following the liberation of ISIL from those territories.¹²⁸ Cases of abuses and torture by both Security forces and PMF were reported during arrests and pre-trial detention, especially targeting Sunni Arabs.¹²⁹

¹¹⁸ Cook, J., Distinguishing Children From ISIS-Affiliated Families in Iraq and Their Unique Barriers for Rehabilitation and Reintegration in: Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume XVII, Issue 3, September 2023, [url](#), p. 52

¹¹⁹ United Nations University, UNIDIR, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Children from Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation: Experiences from Iraq and Al Hol, November 2022, [url](#), p. 7: More information on the definition and characteristic of the so-called ISIL families can be found at: New Lines Institute (The), ISIL in Iraq: The Challenge of Reintegrating 'ISIS Families', 7 July 2020, [url](#)

¹²⁰ AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#); UNDP, Challenges for the Return and Reintegration of Women and Children, October 2022, [url](#), pp. 16, 27

¹²¹ AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

¹²² Parry J. et al., in: UNIDIR, Coming Home: The Return and Reintegration of Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation in Iraq, MEAC Findings Report, April 2023, [url](#), p. 7; Cook, J., Distinguishing Children From ISIS-Affiliated Families in Iraq and Their Unique Barriers for Rehabilitation and Reintegration in: Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume XVII, Issue 3, September 2023, [url](#), p. 52; AI Monitor, Life after al-Hol: Iraqi women's uneasy return from ranks of ISIS, 10 February 2024, [url](#); RFI, Country Overview Iraq, March 2023, [url](#), p. 4;

¹²³ War on the Rocks, Living In The Shadows: Iraq's Remaining Displaced Families, 3 February 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁴ Action Against Hunger, Drivers of Conflict and Community Tensions in Post-War Iraq, 5 May 2023, [url](#), p. 12

¹²⁵ Peacemakers Network, Iraq after the Territorial Defeat of Islamic State, March 2023, [url](#), p. 23

¹²⁶ Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, 'They Are in Control': The rise of paramilitary forces and the security of minorities in Iraq's disputed Territories, January 2022, [url](#), p. 28

¹²⁷ IOM, Reimagining Reintegration, an Analysis of Sustainable Returns after Conflict, 30 March 2023, [url](#), p.8; UNDP, Affiliated with ISIL, October 2022, [url](#), p. 1; Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, 'They Are in Control': The rise of paramilitary forces and the security of minorities in Iraq's disputed Territories, January 2022, [url](#), p. 28

¹²⁸ Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, 'They Are in Control': The rise of paramilitary forces and the security of minorities in Iraq's disputed Territories, January 2022, [url](#), p. 28

¹²⁹ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 7





Saddam Hussein’s tribe, named Albu Nasir, is also reported to face marginalisation due to perceived affiliation to ISIL.¹³⁰ See also [1.2.1 Sunni](#).

Data regarding the number of individuals with perceived affiliation to ISIL in Iraq vary according to sources. Estimates range from 250 000¹³¹ to 300 000.¹³² In 2019, the Iraqi Ministry of Interior announced its plan to detain up to 280 000 people with alleged ISIL’s affiliation,¹³³ most of whom were women and children.¹³⁴ In an article published by The New Lines in July 2020, it is reported that Iraqi authorities estimated 300 000 individuals with family connections to ISIL to be living in camps across ten governorates in Iraq.¹³⁵ According to the US Central Command (CENTCOM), as of December 2022, there were more than 20 000 ISIL leaders and fighters in detention in Iraq.¹³⁶

ISIL’ suspects are charged under the Iraqi Anti-Terrorism Law No. 13 of 2005 in Federal Iraq¹³⁷ and under the Anti-Terror Law No. 3 of 2006 in the KRI.¹³⁸ Individuals accused or suspected to have supported ISIL are registered in a government database with limited possibility for them to appeal.¹³⁹ The framework for prosecution under the Anti-Terrorism Law is deemed as ‘exceptionally broad’,¹⁴⁰ both in Federal Iraq and in the KRI.¹⁴¹ Such a legislation is reportedly used as a ‘pretext’ to unlawfully detain Sunni Arabs, including suspects of affiliation to ISIL,¹⁴² especially in Sunni majority governorates such as Anbar, Salah al-Din, Kirkuk, and Ninewa,¹⁴³ as well as to suppress Sunni protests and detain young Sunni men.¹⁴⁴ Arrests conducted under the Anti-Terrorism Law tend to be carried out without warrants, which are usually been issued only after the arrest.¹⁴⁵ In trial procedures, defendants can be found guilty based on geographical origins.¹⁴⁶ Forced confessions are often used as the only evidence in anti-

¹³⁰ Guardian (The), Rifts remain in Saddam Hussein’s Iraq home town 20 years after his fall, 14 March 2023, [url](#)

¹³¹ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 40

¹³² New Lines (The), ISIS in Iraq: The Challenge of Reintegrating ‘ISIS Families’, 7 July 2020, [url](#)

¹³³ HRW, Iraq: Confining Families With Alleged ISIS Ties Unlawful, 7 May 2019, [url](#)

¹³⁴ UNDP, Affiliated with ISIS, October 2022, [url](#), pp. 14, 16 ; Cook, J., Distinguishing Children From ISIS-Affiliated Families in Iraq and Their Unique Barriers for Rehabilitation and Reintegration in: Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume XVII, Issue 3, September 2023, [url](#), pp. 43, 51

¹³⁵ New Lines (The), ISIS in Iraq: The Challenge of Reintegrating ‘ISIS Families’, 7 July 2020, [url](#)

¹³⁶ Cook, J., Distinguishing Children From ISIS-Affiliated Families in Iraq and Their Unique Barriers for Rehabilitation and Reintegration in: Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume XVII, Issue 3, September 2023, [url](#), p. 43; US Central Command, Centcom – Year in Review 2022: The Fight against Isis, 29 December 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁷ HRW, Human Rights Watch Submission to the UN Human Rights Committee in Advance of its Review of Iraq, 25 January 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁸ UNAMI and OHCHR, Human Rights in the Administration of Justice in Iraq: Trials under the anti-terrorism laws and implications for justice, accountability and social cohesion in the aftermath of ISIL, January 2020, [url](#), p. 4

¹³⁹ War on the Rocks, Living In The Shadows: Iraq’s Remaining Displaced Families, 3 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰ Parry J. et al., in: UNIDIR, Coming Home: The Return and Reintegration of Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation in Iraq, MEAC Findings Report, April 2023, [url](#), pp. 7-8; US Central Command, Centcom – Year in Review 2022: The Fight against Isis, 29 December 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴¹ UNAMI and OHCHR, Human Rights in the Administration of Justice in Iraq: Trials under the anti-terrorism laws and implications for justice, accountability and social cohesion in the aftermath of ISIL, January 2020, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁴² USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁴³ ACLED, Coding Religious Repression and Disorder: Outcomes and Critical Reflections from the ACLED-Religion Pilot Project, 28 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁴⁵ MENA Rights Group, Alternative report submitted in the context of the review of Iraq’s second period report (confidential), 16 March 2022, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁴⁶ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 15



terrorism trials by courts.¹⁴⁷ Human Rights Watch observed that most of the roughly 8 000 prisoners who are on death row, are charged with terrorism crimes.¹⁴⁸ In 2023, UNAMI documented 29 executions. Additionally, the President of Iraq approved the order to execute another 275 individuals.¹⁴⁹ However, no information on the profile of the individuals who were executed or ordered to be executed was provided by the sources consulted in this report. Cases of forced disappearance of suspected ISIL fighters were also reported.¹⁵⁰

In Federal Iraq and in the KRI, boys were, *inter alia*, subjected to proceedings for being accused of ISIL affiliation. As of March 2023, AI documented the cases of over 200 Iraqi boys accused of affiliation to ISIL being detained in Baghdad after their transfer from northern Syria, without any charge or trial.¹⁵¹ For more information see [1.4.2 Children with perceived affiliation to ISIL](#).

Treatment of family members

Exact figures on the numbers of families with perceived ISIL affiliation are difficult to estimate as this information is not recorded by humanitarian agencies and due the complexity of the definition of 'ISIL-affiliated' itself.¹⁵² Involvement of one family member in ISIL's activities could reportedly have an impact on every family member, including in cases where support to the organisation was forced or in cases where accused individuals had no connection with ISIL.¹⁵³ In cases when one family member is accused to have sided with ISIL, this would lead to what has been defined as a 'collective punishment', where all the family would be 'shunned', resulting in displacement of thousands of people in underdeveloped areas without assistance.¹⁵⁴

USDOS reported that family members of ISIL suspects, notably Sunni Arabs, have been arbitrarily detained to induce absconding family members to show up to the 'authorities'. Additionally, the same source stated that relatives of ISIL suspects have been subjected to movement restrictions, especially in formerly ISIL-controlled areas such as Anbar, Dohuk, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din governorates.¹⁵⁵ While ISIL fighters are prosecuted under the state legal system,¹⁵⁶ families with perceived ISIL affiliation are required to undergo a combination of different justice mechanisms: intelligence, tribal, and state justice.¹⁵⁷ In

¹⁴⁷ HRW, Iraq: Unlawful Mass Executions Resume, 24 January 2024, [url](#); MENA Rights Group, Alternative report submitted in the context of the review of Iraq's second period report (confidential), 16 March 2022, [url](#), p. 16; USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 6

¹⁴⁸ HRW, Iraq: Unlawful Mass Executions Resume, 24 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹ UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), Report of the Secretary-General, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para.60

¹⁵⁰ Freedom in the World 2023 Iraq, 13 April 2023, [url](#); USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#) p. 11

¹⁵¹ AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵² Parry J. et al., in: UNIDIR, Coming Home: The Return and Reintegration of Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation in Iraq, MEAC Findings Report, April 2023, [url](#), p. 8

¹⁵³ Peacemakers Network, Iraq after the Territorial Defeat of Islamic State, March 2023, [url](#), p. 23; War on the Rocks, Living In The Shadows: Iraq's Remaining Displaced Families, 3 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴ War on the Rocks, Living In The Shadows: Iraq's Remaining Displaced Families, 3 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 19, 39, 40

¹⁵⁶ Thiefaïne. C., Iraqi Tribal Justice Put to the Test as Islamic State Families Return, 19 February 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷ Bobseine, H., comments during external expert review of the report, 03 April 2023 originally cited in EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#), p. 58



communities where a Local Peace Agreement (LPA) was signed, security clearance is applied to the whole family, resulting in the denial of clearance to wife and children in case when the head of household would have failed the vetting process.¹⁵⁸ At times, in trial procedures, defendants are reported to be found guilty based on family ties to another defendant.¹⁵⁹

Return of persons with perceived affiliation to ISIL

Return to communities of origin of individuals with perceived affiliation to ISIL can be hampered by security actors¹⁶⁰ and by local communities.¹⁶¹ In the KRI, return of Arab families who fled in 2014 during the conflict with ISIL to villages bordering Syria is prevented by Kurdish authorities.¹⁶² See [2.3.1. Entry, residency requirements and access to civil documentation and services](#)

Individuals displaced during ISIL conflict are required by the Iraqi government to undergo an administrative process to return to their communities. The process, which varies across governorates, sometimes¹⁶³ includes a security clearance issued by security and political actors. Individuals with perceived affiliation to ISIL are required to undergo *tabriya*,¹⁶⁴ a tribal procedure aimed to publicly disavow male family members to be accepted into a community and access civil documentation.¹⁶⁵ *Ikhbar*, a tribal procedure aimed at reporting a relative with perceived affiliation to ISIS, may be also requested. Resorting to *tabriya* or *ikhbar* can allow access to documents such as the Housing Card. Nonetheless, having gone through *tabriya* or *ikhbar* can be perceived by some actors as a confirmation of affiliation to ‘extremist groups’.¹⁶⁶

For more information on tribal aspects related to the treatment of persons with perceived affiliation to ISIL, see the EUAA COI [Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law Report, April 2023](#).

¹⁵⁸ WBG, Local Peace Agreements and the Return of IDPs with Perceived ISIL Affiliation in Iraq, January 2022, [url](#), p. 25

¹⁵⁹ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 15

¹⁶⁰ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 12; Parry J. et al., in: UNIDIR, Coming Home: The Return and Reintegration of Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation in Iraq, MEAC Findings Report, April 2023, [url](#), p. 10; Al Monitor, Life after al-Hol: Iraqi women’s uneasy return from ranks of ISIS, 10 February 2024, [url](#); UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, p. 62, cited by UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#), p. 110, footnote 806

¹⁶¹ UNDP, Affiliated with ISIS, October 2022, [url](#), pp. 17-18

¹⁶² Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶³ Parry J. et al., in: UNIDIR, Coming Home: The Return and Reintegration of Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation in Iraq, MEAC Findings Report, April 2023, [url](#), p. 10; DRC/NRC, Life in the margins: Re-examining the needs of paperless people in post-conflict Iraq, [url](#), p. 43; UNDP, Pathways to Reintegration: IRAQ Families Formerly Associated with ISI, February 2021, [url](#), p. 16

¹⁶⁴ War on the Rocks, Living In The Shadows: Iraq’s Remaining Displaced Families, 3 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵ J. Cook, Distinguishing Children from ISIS-Affiliated Families in Iraq and their Unique Barriers for Rehabilitation and Reintegration, September 2023, [url](#), p. 54; Parry J. et al., in: UNIDIR, Coming Home: The Return and Reintegration of Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation in Iraq, MEAC Findings Report, April 2023, [url](#), p. 11; DRC/NRC, Life in the margins: Re-examining the needs of paperless people in post-conflict Iraq, [url](#), p. 19; UNDP, Pathways to Reintegration: IRAQ Families Formerly Associated with ISI, February 2021, [url](#), p. 19

¹⁶⁶ DRC/NRC, Life in the margins: Re-examining the needs of paperless people in post-conflict Iraq, [url](#), p. 19





Civil documentation and security clearance

Return of IDPs to their communities of origin is hindered by lack of civil documentation and by the required security clearance to access offices issuing such documents.¹⁶⁷ In March 2021, the Iraqi Court of Cassation established that women with perceived ISIL affiliation are required by the Iraqi government to provide evidence of a death certificate or detention of the father of the child. Since many men disappeared or died during conflict, such a requirement is reportedly 'impossible' to obtain. In March 2022, courts across Iraq, following a request from the Forensics Department of the Ministry of Health in Baghdad, started to require DNA samples from up to three male paternal relatives to obtain a birth certificate or other civil documents for children. Such a process is reportedly lengthy and complex. In July of 2022, the High Judicial Council, the judicial advisory panel which oversees the Iraqi judiciary, confirmed the requirement of multiple DNA tests and re-affirmed that, for women with foreign ISIL-affiliated spouses, birth registration of children is impossible. In light of the above, access to civil documentation is reportedly available only for a limited minority of families with perceived affiliation to ISIL.¹⁶⁸

Since 2014, individuals suspected to be affiliated with ISIL have been registered by Iraqi security actors in a database which included also first-degree relatives. To be removed by the database, a security clearance is needed. Security clearance, which is a prerequisite to access civil documentation and freedom of movement,¹⁶⁹ is difficult to obtain also due to lack of civil documentation needed to prove the identity of individuals undergoing such a procedure. The process to obtain security clearance is deemed as 'inconsistent and opaque', thus creating opportunity for corruption and abuses of power, including sexual abuse and extortion, smuggling and trafficking.¹⁷⁰ Security clearance is often denied by the authorities for IDPs with perceived affiliation to ISIL.¹⁷¹ For what concerns the return of the so-called 'ISIL families' from Al Hol camp in Syria, this is further complicated due to the additional prerequisite of sponsorship by a trusted community member, usually a relative or a tribal leader.¹⁷² (See [2.1.2. Entry, residency requirements and access to civil documentation and services](#)).

As reported by various NGOs and USDOS, after ISIL's defeat, the PMF prevented the return of residents to their homes, including Sunni Arabs and other ethnic and religious minorities.¹⁷³ IDPs have continued to face stigmatisation, discrimination, harassment, revenge killings, and difficulty to obtain security clearances and accessing reconstruction funds.¹⁷⁴ UNHCR noted that the lack of civil documentation by IDPs perceived to be affiliated to ISIL hampers their

¹⁶⁷ United Nations University, UNIDIR, *The Road Home from Al Hol Camp: Reflections on the Iraqi Experience*, MEAC Findings Report 2024, December 2022, [url](#), pp. 32, 33; Al Monitor, *Life after al-Hol: Iraqi women's uneasy return from ranks of ISIS*, 10 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸ DRC/NRC, *Life in the margins: Re-examining the needs of paperless people in post-conflict Iraq*, [url](#), p. 19

¹⁶⁹ DRC/NRC, *Life in the margins: Re-examining the needs of paperless people in post-conflict Iraq*, [url](#), p. 19

¹⁷⁰ UNDP, *Pathways to Reintegration: IRAQ Families Formerly Associated with ISIL*, February 2021, [url](#), p. 16

¹⁷¹ USDOS, *2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq*, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 39

¹⁷² United Nations University, UNIDIR, *Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Children from Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation: Experiences from Iraq and Al Hol*, November 2022, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁷³ USDOS, *2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq*, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 29, 33, 34

¹⁷⁴ HRW, *Interview with EUAA*, 13 March 2023, originally cited in EUAA, *COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law*, April 2023, [url](#); USDOS, *2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq*, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 40





access to basic services such as education, healthcare, and social security benefits, leading to restricted freedom of movement and increased risk of arrest.¹⁷⁵

Return to the community of origin is often rejected for families from Al Hol camp in Syria and IDPs with perceived links to ISIL, often being excluded and stigmatised by their communities,¹⁷⁶ subjected to revenge attacks, violence¹⁷⁷ and sexual assault.¹⁷⁸ According to one interviewee by The Guardian in June 2023 living in Jeddah 1 camp,¹⁷⁹ her tribe would not allow her return to her community of origin due to a relative's connection with ISIL.¹⁸⁰ Many so-called 'ISIL families' cannot return to their home villages because of the application of tribal law, such as *tabriya* or *diyya*, a monetary compensation tribal mechanism aimed to settle crimes.¹⁸¹ At times, tribal leaders and *mukhtar* reportedly played a key role in encouraging community cohesion and acceptance towards families with perceived ISIL affiliation.¹⁸² Societal stigmatisation by communities from where IDPs originates have been intensified whenever an attack by ISIL occurs.¹⁸³ Due to the inability to move freely, IDP households are reported to struggle to access livelihoods.¹⁸⁴

Since the launch of an extensive repatriation programme in 2021,¹⁸⁵ the Iraqi government is speeding up the process for the return of individuals from Al Hol camp in North-East Syria.¹⁸⁶ Among these individuals there are 'wives and children of Islamic State fighters but also supporters of the militant group'.¹⁸⁷ Returnees are temporarily accommodated in a 'rehabilitation centre', in Jeddah 1,¹⁸⁸ before being able to return to their areas of origin or

¹⁷⁵ UNHCR, Access to civil documentation IDPs and IDPs returnees in Iraq 2022-2023, 24 August 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶ UNDP, Affiliated with ISIS: Challenges For The Return And Reintegration Of Women And Children, [url](#), p. 68; IRC Protection Needs Overview: Monitoring and Trends (April 2023 – September 2023), 10 December 2023, [url](#), p. 6; UNSC, Conflict-related sexual violence Report of the Secretary-General, 22 June 2023, [url](#), para: 37

¹⁷⁷ Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Children from Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation: Experiences from Iraq and Al Hol, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁷⁸ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹ Jeddah 1 is designated by the Iraqi government as a 'rehabilitation centre' where returnees are temporarily accommodated before being able to return to their areas of origin or integration; see United Nations University, UNIDIR, The Road Home from Al Hol Camp: Reflections on the Iraqi Experience, MEAC Findings Report 2024, December 2022, [url](#), pp. 7-8; New Humanitarian (The), In Iraq, a rushed camp closure fuels unease over the safety of IS returns, 24 August 2023, [url](#); Al Monitor, Life after al-Hol: Iraqi women's uneasy return from ranks of ISIS, 10 February 2024, [url](#); UNDP, Affiliated with ISIS: Challenges for the Return And Reintegration of Women and Children, [url](#), p. 36

¹⁸⁰ Guardian (The), The people don't want us': inside a camp for Iraqis returned from Syrian detention, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁸¹ Thiefaïne. C., Iraqi Tribal Justice Put To The Test As Islamic State Families Return, 19 February 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸² Perry J., et al., Coming Home: The Return and Reintegration of Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation in Iraq, MEAC Findings Report, UNIDIR, April 2023, [url](#), p. 14

¹⁸³ UNDP, Affiliated With Isis: Challenges For The Return And Reintegration Of Women And Children, [url](#), p. 25

¹⁸⁴ United Nations University, UNIDIR, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Children from Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation: Experiences from Iraq and Al Hol, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁸⁵ Al Monitor, Life after al-Hol: Iraqi women's uneasy return from ranks of ISIS, 10 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶ AP News, Iraq steps up repatriations from Islamic State camp in Syria, hoping to reduce militant threats, 15 September 2023, [url](#); Guardian (The), 'The people don't want us': inside a camp for Iraqis returned from Syrian detention, 15 June 2023, [url](#); IOM, Emerging practices of rehabilitation in Muslim-majority countries, 7 February 2024, p. 14, [url](#)

¹⁸⁷ AP News, Iraq steps up repatriations from Islamic State camp in Syria, hoping to reduce militant threats, 15 September 2023, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸ New Humanitarian (The), In Iraq, a rushed camp closure fuels unease over the safety of IS returns, 24 August 2023, [url](#); Al Monitor, Life after al-Hol: Iraqi women's uneasy return from ranks of ISIS, 10 February 2024, [url](#)



being integrated.¹⁸⁹ As of January 2024, 7 575 individuals have been repatriated to Iraq,¹⁹⁰ while 3 079 individuals remain in Jeddah 1 camp.¹⁹¹ For instance, in Tel Afar, the local agreement signed in 2018 by Shia and Sunni tribal leaders contained a provision preventing the return of first-degree relatives of any person involved in terrorist acts, unless they underwent *tabriya*.¹⁹²

For more information on tribal aspects related to the treatment of persons with perceived affiliation to ISIL, see the EUAA COI report [Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law Report, April 2023](#).

Additional concerns over the return of families with ISIL ties arose also in consideration of the rushed closure in April 2023 of Jeddah 5, the last official camp for IDPs in Iraq.¹⁹³ The closure occurred within short notice and without preparation for communities of return and for the so called 'ISIL families'.¹⁹⁴ For more information on IDPs, see [EUAA 2024 Iraq -Security Situation Report](#).

Law n. 20/2009¹⁹⁵ on reparation for civil victims of the war has been reportedly implemented in a discriminatory manner for persons perceived to be affiliated to ISIL, preventing them from receiving or applying for compensation.¹⁹⁶

1.2. Ethnic and religious minorities

The Iraqi Constitution¹⁹⁷ recognises freedom of religion and belief,¹⁹⁸ stipulating that Islam is the official religion in Iraq.¹⁹⁹ The Personal Status Law recognises a list of registered religious groups, allowing them to perform legal transactions and to appoint legal representatives.²⁰⁰ The religious groups recognised by the law are: Muslim, Chaldean, Assyrian, Assyrian Catholic, Syriac Orthodox,

¹⁸⁹ UNDP, Affiliated with ISIS: Challenges For The Return And Reintegration Of Women And Children, [url](#), p. 36

¹⁹⁰ Al Monitor, Life after al-Hol: Iraqi women's uneasy return from ranks of ISIS, 10 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹¹ UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), Report of the Secretary-General, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para.71

¹⁹² Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, 'They Are in Control': The rise of paramilitary forces and the security of minorities in Iraq's disputed Territories, January 2022, [url](#), p. 28

¹⁹³ HRW, World Report 2024: Iraq, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹⁴ New Humanitarian (The), In Iraq, a rushed camp closure fuels unease over the safety of IS returns, 24 August 2023, [url](#); AP News, Residents, aid workers surprised by closure of Iraqi camp, 18 April 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, UN 'concerned' about hasty closure of IDP camp in Nineveh, 19 April 2023, [url](#)

¹⁹⁵ Iraq, Law n. 20/2009, [url](#)

¹⁹⁶ Human Rights Watch, Iraq: Compensation for ISIS Victims Too Little, Too Late, 9 May 2023, [url](#)

¹⁹⁷ Article 2 (1) reads: 'Islam is the official religion of the State and is a foundation source of legislation: A. No law may be enacted that contradicts the established provisions of Islam, B. No law may be enacted that contradicts the principles of democracy, C. No law may be enacted that contradicts the rights and basic freedoms stipulated in this Constitution'. Article 2 (2) reads: 'This Constitution Guarantees the Islamic identity of the majority of the Iraqi people and guarantees the full religious rights to freedom of religious Belief and practice of all individuals such as Christians, Yazidis, and Mandaean Sabaeans'. Iraq, Constitution of the Republic of Iraq, 15 October 2005, [url](#), Art. 2 (1), Art. 2 (2)

¹⁹⁸ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url url](#), p. 6; Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

¹⁹⁹ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 1

²⁰⁰ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), pp. 7-8; RFI, Country Overview Iraq, March 2023, [url](#), p. 4



Syriac Catholic, Armenian Apostolic, Armenian Catholic, Roman Catholic, National Protestant, Anglican, Evangelical Protestant Assyrian, Seventh-day Adventist, Coptic Orthodox, Yazidi, Sabean-Mandean and Jewish. Moreover, personal status courts are established for each recognised religious groups, ruling on disputes related to marriage, divorce, and inheritance. However, according to the government, there is no personal status court for Yazidis.²⁰¹ Baha'i, Zoroastrian, and Kaka'i religions are not recognised. While in the KRI, Baha'i faith is recognised, the Federal law prohibits the practice of Baha'i religion, foreseeing sentences up to 10 years of prison for the practitioners. However, USDOS reported that this law is not enforced.²⁰²

The Iraqi Penal code does not contain any provision regarding conversion.²⁰³ Personal status laws and regulations prohibit the conversion of Muslims to other religions.²⁰⁴ By law, converts to Christianity are considered as Muslims. In contrast, a non-Muslim individual can convert to Islam through a 'simple process'. According to Christian leaders, authorities continued to force Christian families to register their children as Muslims in order for them to access civil documentation.²⁰⁵ Children with one Muslim parent are automatically registered as Muslims.²⁰⁶ (See [1.2.3. Conflict-related sexual violence](#)). Organisations that declare any Muslims as apostates, including ISIL, are forbidden according to the law.²⁰⁷ Apostasy cases are adjudicated under *Sharia* law.²⁰⁸ Blasphemy is criminalised under the Penal Code.²⁰⁹ Nonetheless, the law is rarely enforced.²¹⁰ In some cases, blasphemy laws can be used against Christians suspected to proselytise among Muslims.²¹¹ According the Iraqi Personal Status Law No. 188/1959 (IPSL), Muslim men are allowed to marry a non-Muslim woman, belonging to Christian, Jewish, or Sabean Mandean faith, while it prohibits Muslim women from marrying non-Muslims.²¹² Sunni-Shia marriages are permissible under Iraqi law.²¹³

For more information on the treatment of converts and atheists and individuals engaged in inter-sect/inter-faith marriages see [1.6.2 Converts and atheists](#) and [1.6.3 Individuals in inter-sect/inter-faith marriages](#).

²⁰¹ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 8

²⁰² USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), pp. 6, 8, 24

²⁰³ Iraq, Penal Code, No. 111 of 1969, July 1969, [url](#)

²⁰⁴ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 6; Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#); Open Doors International, World Watch List 2024: Iraq, January 2024, [url](#), p. 7

²⁰⁵ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 21

²⁰⁶ Iraq, National Card Law, No. (3) of 2016, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#); RFI, Country Overview Iraq, March 2023, [url](#), p. 4; UN Human Rights Committee, Concluding Observations on the 6th Periodic Report, 16 August 2022, [url](#), para. 30

²⁰⁷ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 6

²⁰⁸ USCIRF, Compendium, [url](#), p. 10; Iraq, Personal Status Law and its amendments, Law N° (188) of the year 1959, [url](#)

²⁰⁹ USCIRF, Violating rights, Enforcing the world's blasphemy laws, 2020, [url](#), p. 65

²¹⁰ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

²¹¹ Open Doors International, World Watch List 2024: Iraq, January 2024, [url](#), p. 3

²¹² Iraq, Personal Status Law and its amendments, Law N° (188) of the year 1959, [url](#); USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 7; USCIRF, 2023 Anti-Conversion Laws Compendium, [url](#), p. 21; RFI, Country Overview Iraq, March 2023, [url](#), p. 4; UN Human Rights Committee, Concluding Observations on the 6th Periodic Report, 16 August 2022, [url](#), para. 30

²¹³ Sanbar S., email communication to EUAA, 16 March 2024



Participation of minorities to political life is hindered by lack of a meaningful political representation.²¹⁴ A quota system is in place to nominally ensure a representation of smaller religious and ethnic minorities in the Council of Representatives.²¹⁵ In Iraq, a total of nine out of 329 seats are assigned to minorities from different provinces,²¹⁶ five seats are reserved for Christians and one seat each for Fayli Kurds, Yazidis, Sabeen Mandean, and Shabaks. In the KRI, five seats are reserved for Turkmen, five for Christians, and one for Armenians.²¹⁷ Similarly, in the KRI political participation of the minorities remains weak due to the power of ruling political party, such as KDP.²¹⁸ The widespread displacement from areas formerly occupied by ISIL is an additional factor that has hindered the political rights of minority groups.²¹⁹ In February 2024, Iraq's federal court ruled that the Kurdistan Region parliament's minority quota seats are "unconstitutional", rejecting the legitimacy of the legislature's 11 minority seats.²²⁰

The draft laws on Cybercrime and Freedom of Expression and Peaceful Assembly, re-introduced to Parliament between November 2022 and May 2023, if passed, could be used as a means to target religious minorities and atheists, restricting religious expression, livelihoods and assembly.²²¹ As of February 2024, the approval of the draft law on Cybercrime has reportedly been postponed due to the opposition.²²² See [1.1.1 Members of political opposition parties, political and human rights activists, protesters.](#)

1.2.1. Treatment of ethno-religious minorities

Decades of conflict and violence severely affected the historical ethnic and religious diversity of the country, particularly ethno-religious minorities,²²³ and intensified current sectarian divisions and mistrust among communities.²²⁴ Notwithstanding the recognition of freedom of religion and belief enshrined in the Iraqi Constitution, legislative framework and customs reportedly favour the Muslim majority.²²⁵ Members of religious minority groups continue to experience 'social and political disenfranchisement and restrictions on their freedom of religion or belief'.²²⁶ In some cases, misconceptions and stereotypes reportedly fuelled hate speech against minorities.²²⁷ Non-Muslim minority groups reported instances of abductions, threats, pressure and harassment with the aim to force them to observe Islamic traditions, mainly by Iran-backed militia groups.²²⁸

²¹⁴ USCIRF, Country Update Iraq, September 2023, [url](#), p. 1; MEI, Addressing challenges to tolerance and religious diversity in Iraq, 5 July 2023, [url](#); Manara Magazine, The Political Marginalisation of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Iraq, 17 March 2022, [url](#);

²¹⁵ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

²¹⁶ USCIRF, Country Update Iraq, September 2023, [url](#), p.3

²¹⁷ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

²¹⁸ Manara Magazine, The Political Marginalisation of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Iraq, 17 March 2022, [url](#)

²¹⁹ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#); RFI, Country Overview Iraq, March 2023, [url](#), p. 4

²²⁰ Rudaw, Iraq's top court rules against Kurdistan Region parliament minority seats, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

²²¹ USCIRF, Country Update Iraq, September 2023, [url](#), p.3; AI, Iraq: Draft laws threaten rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, 18 July 2023, [url](#)

²²² UNDP, Media landscape in Iraq, 5 February 2024, [url](#), p. 8

²²³ MEI, Addressing challenges to tolerance and religious diversity in Iraq, 5 July 2023, [url](#)

RFI, Country Overview Iraq, March 2023, [url](#), p. 4

²²⁴ JISRA, JISRA in Iraq, August 2022, [url](#), p. 1; USCIRF, Country Update Iraq, September 2023, [url](#), p. 1

²²⁵ Australia, DFAT, Country Information Report Iraq, 16 January 2023, [url](#), p. 17; MEI, Addressing challenges to tolerance and religious diversity in Iraq, 5 July 2023, [url](#)

²²⁶ USCIRF, Country Update Iraq, September 2023, [url](#)

²²⁷ MEI, Addressing challenges to tolerance and religious diversity in Iraq, 5 July 2023, [url](#)

²²⁸ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 30



According to USCIRF, the PMF is considered as one of the most ‘widespread and politically empowered impediments’ to religious freedom in Iraq.²²⁹ Iran-backed PMF militias were reportedly involved in killing, kidnapping, and extortion, particularly in ethnically and religiously mixed provinces.²³⁰

Violence and displacement due to religious identity still occur. Reportedly, discrimination is mostly experienced in areas where the targeted religious and ethnic groups are a minority, leading to displacement of those groups in other areas.²³¹ In the KRI, IDP minority groups experienced property theft and discrimination in accessing labour market.²³²

Sunnis

PMF militias in Mosul and Ninewa intensified political oppression and extortion towards Sunnis, particularly following the October 2021 election.²³³ Unlawful detention of minority groups by PMF in Ninewa governorate, notably Kurds, Turkmen and Christians, was reported. Detainees were arrested on a sectarian basis and held in secret prisons in Ninewa.²³⁴ As emerged in a focus group conducted in December 2022 by Action against Hunger in five districts in Ninewa, sectarian and tribal tensions persist, while societal cohesion may vary depending on communities. For instance, in Tal Afar, it emerged that fears of violence based on religious affiliation continue and that Sunnis feel discriminated against for being perceived as ISIL supporters. In Sinjar, tensions between Yazidis and Sunnis were reported.²³⁵ In Mosul, PMF-affiliated groups, such as Kataib Babiliyoun²³⁶ and Shabak Hashd²³⁷ ‘indiscriminately harass, intimidate, and arrest Sunni civilians’.²³⁸ Sunni Arabs were also unlawfully detained, amounting to 90 % of all prisoners in detention in Iraq, and were subjected to torture to extract confessions.²³⁹ According to the Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA),²⁴⁰ as of August 2022, security forces continued to arbitrarily detain, deny fair trials, and forcibly disappear Sunni Arabs because of suspicions of their affiliation to ISIL.²⁴¹

Sunni Arabs were particularly subjected to ‘abuses and tortures’ during arrest and pretrial detention by Federal Police, NSS, PMF²⁴² and they were regularly targeted at PMF

²²⁹ USCIRF, Country Update Iraq, September 2023, [url](#), p. 3

²³⁰ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 5

²³¹ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#); RFI, Country Overview Iraq, March 2023, [url](#), p. 4

²³² USCIRF, Country Update Iraq, September 2023, [url](#), p. 5

²³³ Brookings, New Vulnerabilities for Iraq’s Resilient Popular Mobilization Forces, 3 February 2022, [url](#)

²³⁴ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 12

²³⁵ Action Against Hunger, Conflict sensitivity assessment in Ninewa, 27 January 2023, [url](#), pp. 4, 12; Sipri, Post-Conflict Reconstruction in The Nineveh Plains of Iraq, November 2022, [url](#), p. 20

²³⁶ For more information, see: Knights M., Beth-Addai Y., Profile: Kataib Babiliyoun (50th PMF Brigade), 16 March 2023, [url](#)

²³⁷ For more information, see: Malik H., Profile: Hashd al-Shabak (30th PMF Brigade), 22 June 2022, [url](#)

²³⁸ Bertelsmann Foundation, Iraq Country Report 2022, 23 February 2022, [url](#)

²³⁹ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 32

²⁴⁰ JISRA (Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action) is an international interfaith consortium and is based on a partnership of 50 civil society organisations based in Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda. The consortium consists of Mensen met een Missie, Faith to Action Network, Tearfund (UK and Netherlands) and Search For Common Ground.

²⁴¹ JISRA, JISRA in Iraq, August 2022, [url](#), p. 1

²⁴² USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 7



checkpoints for alleged ISIL affiliation.²⁴³ USDOS reported that, during 2022, in some cases, Sunni individuals were accused of ISIL affiliation to silence their criticism and were held in secret detention centres by the PMF. According to the same source, in Ninewa province, Sunni Turkmen were targeted by PMF at checkpoints and asked for PMF clearance in order to obtain government documentation. It is reported that Shia-backed PMF militia committed physical abuses on Sunni civilians as a reprisal for ISIL crimes against Shias. In November 2022, allegations were raised by Sunni representatives in the parliament over the PMF preventing displaced Sunnis in Salah al-Din, Diyala, and Ninewa Province to return to their areas of origins.²⁴⁴ See also [1.1.3 Individuals with \(perceived\) affiliation to ISIL](#).

Christians

After 2003, most members of Christian communities from central and southern governorates fled to the KRI to escape sectarian violence.²⁴⁵ According to Open Doors, the Iraqi government mostly tolerates historical churches. Members of historical Christian communities (i.e. mostly Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches) as well as Evangelical, Baptist and Pentecostal churches in Baghdad and Basra, have however been 'affected by violations from radical Islamic movements and non-Christian leaders, including discrimination from the authorities.'²⁴⁶ Sources reported that Christians in Iraq have been exposed to harassment, discrimination and violence,²⁴⁷ with alleged tolerance of such targeting by authorities.²⁴⁸ Instances of land and properties grabbing from Christians occurred,²⁴⁹ particularly in Ninewa plains. In the same area, Christians accused government officials of promoting a demographic change in favour of Shia Shabak, also in light of the fact that most Christians did not return to their areas of origin after ISIL's defeat.²⁵⁰ According to USCIRF, the PMF continued to target Christians through enforced disappearance, extortion, and physical violence, as well as by controlling small communities imposing checkpoints and curfews. The same source stated that restrictions on transporting goods between villages were also applied to Christian business owners and farmers.²⁵¹ Following the entry into force of the law banning alcohol in February 2023, Christian politicians asked for the overturn of the law claiming that it did not take into account the right of minorities, restricting their freedom.²⁵² (See [1.6 Individuals perceived as transgressing moral and religious norms](#)). In the KRI, Christians were not reported to experience interference by the government in their religious practices.²⁵³

²⁴³ USCIRF, Country Update Iraq, 2022, April 2022, [url](#)

²⁴⁴ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 12

²⁴⁵ CFRI, Christians in Post-2003 Iraq: Fragmentation Dynamics, Ethnic and Sectarian Fault Lines, 11 August 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, Iraqi Christians exodus leaves churches empty in the south, 25 January 2024, [url](#)

²⁴⁶ Open Doors International, World Watch List 2024: Iraq, January 2024, [url](#), p. 3

²⁴⁷ CFRI, Christians in Post-2003 Iraq: Fragmentation Dynamics, Ethnic and Sectarian Fault Lines, 11 August 2023, [url](#); USCIRF, Country Update Iraq, September 2023, [url](#), p. 4

²⁴⁸ USCIRF, Country Update Iraq, September 2023, [url](#), p. 4

²⁴⁹ Open Doors International, World Watch List 2024: Iraq, January 2024, [url](#), p. 5

²⁵⁰ IOM, Barriers to Return for Ethno-Religious Minorities in Iraq: Identity Politics and Political Patronage Among Yazidi and Christian Communities from Ninewa Governorate, January 2020, [url](#), p. 29; CFRI, Christians in Post-2003 Iraq: Fragmentation Dynamics, Ethnic and Sectarian Fault Lines, 11 August 2023, [url](#); SIPRI, Post-Conflict Reconstruction In The Nineveh Plains Of Iraq, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 20-22

²⁵¹ USCIRF, Country Update Iraq, September 2023, [url](#), p. 4

²⁵² BBC, Iraq alcohol ban: Christian political party appeals, saying it is undemocratic, 6 March 2023, [url](#); Al Monitor, 'Iraq is not an Islamic country': Minorities protest Baghdad's alcohol ban as unconstitutional, 12 March 2023, [url](#)

²⁵³ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#)



Yazidis

Yazidis still face discrimination,²⁵⁴ particularly by the PMF,²⁵⁵ who have continued to engage in acts of violence, extortion and enforced disappearance.²⁵⁶ In December 2022, the Iraqi Council of Ministers issued a decree granting Yazidis ownership of their residential properties in Sinjar.²⁵⁷ Progress has been reportedly achieved by the government in the further implementation of the Yazidi Survivors Law.²⁵⁸ The law was adopted by the government in 2021 to provide compensation for Yazidis and other ethnic minorities such as Turkmen, Christians, and Shabaks.²⁵⁹ First reparations were distributed in March 2023, but significant obstacles to the law's full implementation have remained in place.²⁶⁰ Despite the progress achieved, Yazidis have remained marginalised, with constraints including accessing the labour market.²⁶¹ In April 2023, a campaign of hate speech reportedly targeted the Yazidi community based on accusation of burning a mosque in Sinjar.²⁶² In the KRI, Yazidis were not reported to experience interference by authorities in their religious observances.²⁶³ For information on Yazidi children, see section [1.4.2 Children with perceived affiliation to ISIL](#).

Other ethnic and religious minorities

While Baha'i faith is recognised in the KRI²⁶⁴ by law, it is forbidden in Federal Iraq, although the ban is not enforced.²⁶⁵ Believers are not recognised as members of a minority religion,²⁶⁶ living in a condition of longstanding isolation.²⁶⁷ Due to challenges in obtaining identity documents and due to discrimination they face, many Baha'i are reported as stateless.²⁶⁸ Additionally, since Baha'i marriages are unregistered, children born to such marriages effectively become stateless.²⁶⁹

According to the Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development (CREID), Sabean-Mandean are reported to live in 'constant threat' from extremist Islamist groups, without protection granted by the authorities, and vulnerable to seizure of lands.²⁷⁰ Sabean-Mandean

²⁵⁴ Open Doors International, World Watch List 2024: Iraq, January 2024, [url](#), p. 8

²⁵⁵ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

²⁵⁶ USCIRF, Country Update Iraq, September 2023, [url](#), p. 4

²⁵⁷ USDOS, 2023 Report to Congress on Section 5 of the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-441) [as amended], 2 August 2023, [url](#); USCIRF, Country update Iraq 2023, September 2023, [url](#)

²⁵⁸ Iraq, Law No.8 of 2021 - Yazidi Female Survivors Law, [url](#)

²⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch, Iraq: Compensation for ISIS Victims Too Little, Too Late, 9 May 2023, [url](#)

²⁶⁰ USCIRF, Country Update Iraq, September 2023, [url](#), p. 5

²⁶¹ MEI, Addressing challenges to tolerance and religious diversity in Iraq, 5 July 2023, [url](#)

²⁶² Coalition for just reparations, Coalition for Just Reparations Condemns Hate Speech and Accusations Against Yazidi, 11 March 2023, [url](#); Kurdistan24, Iraqi Sunni Endowment confirms no mosques were attacked in Sinjar, 30 April 2024, [url](#); MEI, Addressing challenges to tolerance and religious diversity in Iraq, 5 July 2023, [url](#)

²⁶³ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

²⁶⁴ Open Doors International, World Watch List 2024: Iraq, January 2024, [url](#), p. 8

²⁶⁵ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

²⁶⁶ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#); USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

²⁶⁷ CFRI, Baha'is in Iraq: From the Realm of Shadows to the Demand for Recognition, 2 June 2023, [url](#)

²⁶⁸ Boston University School of Law, The Campaign To End Statelessness In Iraq, March 2022, [url](#), pp. 60-61

²⁶⁹ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

²⁷⁰ CREID, Violence and Discrimination Against Women of Religious Minority Backgrounds in Iraq, 6 December 2022, [url](#), p. 188





are also subject to misconception and stereotypes, being accused of witchcraft and sorcery by Sunni and Shia extremist groups.²⁷¹

Turkmen reportedly experienced discrimination by the authorities both in Iraq and in the KRI²⁷² and experienced hate speech and mockery in media for practicing sacred rituals.²⁷³ In Tel Afar, Turkmen were reportedly harassed at PMF checkpoints.²⁷⁴

Shabaks also face discrimination from authorities, both in Iraq and in the KRI.²⁷⁵ Shia Shabaks were targeted by hate speech and mockery in media for practicing sacred rituals.²⁷⁶

Iraqis of African descent are also reported to face discrimination, political and economic exclusion.²⁷⁷

1.3. Women

Women in Iraq had historically enjoyed more rights compared to most women in other Middle Eastern countries. The position of Iraqi women rapidly deteriorated following the 1991 Gulf War, when a set of laws restricting women's rights was introduced under Saddam Hussein's regime, mostly with the aim to mobilise loyalty and appease conservative religious and tribal groups. Additionally, the US sanctions imposed after the 1991 Gulf War disproportionately affected women and girls in accessing rights, including to education and to employment.²⁷⁸ Iraqi women have been subjected to various forms of violence,²⁷⁹ which has exacerbated with the deteriorated security situation following the US-led 2003 occupation of Iraq²⁸⁰ and the resurgent influence of tribal and religious groups.²⁸¹ Tribal customary laws and practices within Iraqi society are seen as root causes for various forms of violence and violations of women's

²⁷¹ Journal of Balyon Center for Humanities Studies, Vol. 13, Issue 1, The Mandaeans in Iraq Today: Perceptions, Stereotypes, Prejudices, and Exclusion, 2023, [url](#), p. 66; Australia, DFAT, Country Information Report: Iraq, 16 January 2023, [url](#), p. 21

²⁷² USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 19

²⁷³ MEI, Addressing challenges to tolerance and religious diversity in Iraq, 5 July 2023, [url](#); USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

²⁷⁴ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 15

²⁷⁵ Kirkuk Now, Shabak count on provincial council elections for public utilities, 14 December 2023, [url](#); USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 19

²⁷⁶ MEI, Addressing challenges to tolerance and religious diversity in Iraq, 5 July 2023, [url](#)

²⁷⁷ Boston University School of Law, The Campaign To End Statelessness In Iraq, March 2022, [url](#), p. 61

²⁷⁸ HRW, Background on Women's Status in Iraq Prior to the Fall of the Saddam Hussein Government, November 2003, [url](#); Al-Obaidi, B. S., The impact of legislation on empowering women. A comparative study between the effective Iraqi Penal Code No. 111 of 1969 and the new draft Iraqi Penal Code, Journal of Positive School Psychology, Vol. 6 No. 2, 2022, 6134-6148, [url](#), p. 6135

²⁷⁹ Abed A., Violence Against Women in Iraq: Between Practice and Legislation, LSE Blog, 8 July 2020, [url](#); USDOS, 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 30 March 2021, [url](#), pp. 47-53; UNAMI, Opposing Violence Against Women - Remarks by SRSJ Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert Baghdad - 11 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁸⁰ HRW, No one is safe. Abuses of women in Iraq's Criminal Justice System, February 2014, [url](#), pp. 16-18; Cortright, D., et al. ., Women and the Iraq war, 20 years later, Fourth Freedom Forum, 2023, [url](#), pp. 6-7

²⁸¹ Australia, DFAT, Country Information Report Iraq, 16 January 2023, [url](#), p. 29





rights,²⁸² including in the KRI.²⁸³ Women are in practice used as commodities and collateral during the resolution of tribal conflicts,²⁸⁴ for example through forced and child marriage, exchange or trading of women as compensation (*fasliya*), and as part of settlement of a dispute among tribes.²⁸⁵ The so called ‘honour killing’ is among the worst violations of women’s rights as a result of the tribal system.²⁸⁶ (For more information on the impact of tribal customary laws and practices on women and on other profiles in Iraq see [EUAA COI Report Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023](#)).

During the anti-government demonstrations that unfolded across the country²⁸⁷ in 2019²⁸⁸ and 2020,²⁸⁹ women played a central role, taking to the streets to demand for equal rights as well as for broader social, political, and economic change.²⁹⁰

Although individual circumstances vary, Iraqi women across all levels of society have continued to face widespread discrimination in everyday life²⁹¹ as well as various forms of violence as a result of discriminatory laws and traditional cultural norms.²⁹² Women are discriminated against by laws regulating, *inter alia*, freedom of movement, personal status, family (including in areas such as marriage, divorce, child custody), religion, labour (e.g. owning and managing properties or businesses), inheritance and criminal procedure. Since religious groups have their own personal status courts responsible for handling issues related to marriage, divorce, and inheritance,²⁹³ women’s rights may differ among religious groups.²⁹⁴ (See [1.2 Ethnic and religious minorities](#)). From a legal perspective, the situation of women in

²⁸² HRW, Interview with EUAA, 13 March 2023, originally cited in EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#); France24/AFP, In Iraq, tribal traditions rob women, girls of rights, 18 April 2019, [url](#); Alshamary, M., Interview with Al Jazeera, The Stream, Why hasn’t Iraq adopted any laws against domestic violence?, 15 February 2023, [url](#), minutes 1:19 - 1:37; 8:38 – 9:50

²⁸³ Mustafah, R., Addressing Violence Against Women in Iraqi Kurdistan, 28 March 2022, [url](#); AW, Worrying increase of “Honour” crimes in Iraqi Kurdistan, 21 March 2022, [url](#); Hardi, C., The backlash against women’s rights in Iraq’s Kurdistan region, Chatham House, 14 April 2023, [url](#)

²⁸⁴ HRW, Interview with EUAA, 13 March 2023; OWFI, Interview with EUAA, 16 March 2023; Ceasefire for Civilian Rights, Correspondence with EUAA, 16 March 2023, originally cited in EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#)

²⁸⁵ UNHCR, Tribal Conflict Resolution in Iraq, January 15, 2018, [url](#), p. 2; HRW, Interview with EUAA, 13 March 2023; OWFI, Interview with EUAA, 16 March 2023; Ceasefire for Civilian Rights, Correspondence with EUAA, 16 March 2023, originally cited in EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#); Tawfiq Marwan, M., Forced Marriages In Tribal Iraq: A Case Study From Kirkuk, May 2019, [url](#), p. 6-7, 18-19

²⁸⁶ OWFI, Interview with EUAA, 13 March 2023; HRW, Interview with EUAA, 16 March 2023; Ceasefire for Civilian Rights, Correspondence with EUAA, 16 March 2023, originally cited in EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#)

²⁸⁷ Al-Mayali I., Iraqi Women Will Not Be Silenced, 9 February 2021, in IWPR, available at: [url](#)

²⁸⁸ Independent, Women in Iraq defiantly take to the streets despite fears they ‘could die at any moment’, 23 November 2019, [url](#)

²⁸⁹ France 24, Hundreds of Iraqi women defy cleric to protest authorities, 13 February 2020, [url](#)

²⁹⁰ Alkhudary T., Iraqi Women are Engaged in a Struggle for their Rights, LSE’s Middle East Centre Blog, 15 June 2020, [url](#); Cortright, et al., Women and the Iraq war, 20 years later. Fourth Freedom Forum. 2023, [url](#), p. 14

²⁹¹ Australia, DFAT, Country Information Report Iraq, 16 January 2023, [url](#), p. 29; Cortright, D., et al., Women and the Iraq war, 20 years later, Fourth Freedom Forum, 2023, [url](#), p. 10

²⁹² USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 57; Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#); Australia, DFAT, Country Information Report Iraq, 16 January 2023, [url](#), p. 29; HRW, World Report 2024, Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

²⁹³ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 57

²⁹⁴ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 57; CREID, Violence and Discrimination Against Women of Religious Minority Backgrounds in Iraq, 6 December 2022, [url](#), pp. 9, 159-160





the KRI is described as relatively better compared to the rest of the country²⁹⁵ (see [1.3.1 Violence against women](#)). The KRG also established institutions, such as the Directorate of Combating Violence Against Women and the High Council of Women's Affairs, to implement policies on gender equality. The implementation of these reforms has been described as problematic, with activists reporting no genuine will among members of the Kurdish authorities to improve women's rights. Individuals who advocate for gender equality in the KRI are reported to 'face threats from powerful conservative and patriarchal groups that have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo.'²⁹⁶

Women need the consent of a male relative or legal representative to obtain a passport and a Civil Status Identification Document.²⁹⁷ In practice, regardless of whether they are married, divorced and have court-ordered custody, women (including in the KRI) cannot travel with children below the age of 18 without the father's permission. Women who travel alone with their children may be required by border control officers to show proof of the father's permission or of a court document.²⁹⁸

Although women have legally the same rights as men in owning land and other properties, in practice property rights of women are not respected.²⁹⁹ Both the Iraqi³⁰⁰ and Kurdistan Personal Status laws³⁰¹ allow women to initiate divorce proceedings. Divorced women are not entitled to alimony and in some cases, they are required to return their dowry. Although fathers are automatically granted guardianship of their children, divorced mothers may be awarded custody of their children until age 10, extendable by a court up to age 15; afterwards, the children can choose with which parent they wish to live.³⁰²

There is no law prohibiting the participation of women in the political process. Women hold a record 97 seats in parliament,³⁰³ almost 30 % of parliamentary seats for the first time since the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. Nonetheless, women legislators are reported to be largely silent³⁰⁴ and excluded from decision making and political power.³⁰⁵ For instance, there are anecdotal reports about women members of parliament being required to seek approval from their parties' male leadership before expressing opinions publicly. In some rural areas, women are

²⁹⁵ Kaya, Z. N., Gender equality in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan, LSE's Middle East Centre Blog, 5 January 2018, [url](#); Australia, DFAT, Country Information Report Iraq, 16 January 2023, [url](#), p. 29; UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2022, 27 July 2022, [url](#), p. 7

²⁹⁶ Hardi, C., The backlash against women's rights in Iraq's Kurdistan region, Chatham House, 14 April 2023, [url](#), p. 48

²⁹⁷ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 58; Freedom House, Freedom in the world 2023 Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

²⁹⁸ HRW, Trapped, Iraq, 18 July 2023, [url](#), p. 46

²⁹⁹ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 57

³⁰⁰ Iraq, Personal Status Law No. 188/1959, Art. 40-41, [url](#)

³⁰¹ Iraq/KRG, Personal Status Law, Act No. 15/2008, [url](#)

³⁰² USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 57

³⁰³ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 43-44

³⁰⁴ Al Jazeera, As Iraq backslides on gender equality, where are its women MPs?, 9 September 2023, [url](#)

³⁰⁵ New Paradigm Project, Women and the Iraq War, 20 Years Later, March 2023, [url](#), p. 9; UNDP, Adapting the Indashyikirwa Intimate Partner Violence Prevention Programme: Lessons Learned in Iraq and Lebanon, 27 February 2023, [url](#), p. 29





required to be accompanied by a male guardian when casting a ballot at a voting station.³⁰⁶ Women politicians are also reported to face threats from conservative elements in society.³⁰⁷

Illiteracy rates among Iraqi women continued to be higher than among men.³⁰⁸ Significant barriers, such as traditional gender roles and norms, family levels of education, poverty, perceived protection concerns, limit girls' access to education, especially in territories formerly under ISIL' control. In some rural areas, girls are denied access to school by their families.³⁰⁹ Women are disproportionately affected by unemployment, with rates almost twice as high than that for men (28.2 % compared to 14.7 %).³¹⁰

1.3.1. Violence against women

Domestic and honour-based violence

Article 41 of the Penal Code (No.111 of 1969)³¹¹ grants husbands the right to discipline their wives and children.³¹² Article 409 of the Penal Code³¹³ provides mitigating circumstances for the sentence for so called 'honour killings'.³¹⁴ Such provisions are said to enable impunity for male violence against women, including murder for 'honourable motives'.³¹⁵ The Iraqi federal government has not yet adopted a law combatting domestic violence,³¹⁶ and there is no law specifically criminalising spousal rape.³¹⁷

³⁰⁶ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 44

³⁰⁷ Freedom House, Freedom in the world 2023 Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

³⁰⁸ UNFPA, Iraqi Women Integrated Social and Health Survey: Summary of Key Findings, June 2022, [url](#), p. 5

³⁰⁹ UNAMI/ OHCHR, The Right to Education in Iraq, Part Two: Obstacles to Girls' Education after ISIL, 24 January 2021, [url](#) pp. 3, 7

³¹⁰ ILO/CSO/KRSO, Iraqi Labour Force Survey 2021, 5 July 2022, [url](#), pp. 17, 45, 68; CFRI, Women's Economic Empowerment in Iraq: A Double-Edged Sword?, 8 November 2023, [url](#); IOM, Employment in the South of Iraq: Challenging Prospects for Women and Youth, 2023, [url](#), p. 5; World Bank, Women's Labor Force Participation in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, April 2022, [url](#), p. 2

³¹¹ Article 41 (1) reads: 'There is no crime if the act is committed while exercising a legal right. The following are considered to be in exercise of a legal right: (1) The punishment of a wife by her husband, the disciplining by parents and teachers of children under their authority within certain limits prescribed by law or by custom.' Iraq, Penal Code, No. 111 of 1969, July 1969, [url](#), Art. 41 (1)

³¹² UNPD, Iraq - Gender Justice & The Law 2019, [url](#), p. 2; Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

³¹³ Article 409 reads: 'Any person who surprises his wife in the act of adultery or finds his girlfriend in bed with her lover and kills them immediately or one of them or assaults one of them so that he or she dies or is left permanently disabled is punishable by a period of detention not exceeding 3 years. It is not permissible to exercise the right of legal defense against any person who uses this excuse nor do the rules of aggravating circumstance apply against him.' Iraq, Penal Code, No. 111 of 1969, July 1969, [url](#), Art. 409

³¹⁴ UNAMI/OHCHR, Accountability for Domestic violence in Iraq: Promoting justice and non-discrimination, 7 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6

³¹⁵ HRW, World Report 2024, Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

³¹⁶ HRW, World Report 2024, Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom in the world 2023 Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#); AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

³¹⁷ UNPD, Iraq - Gender Justice & The Law 2019, [url](#), p. 2; USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#)



Despite continued efforts by women's rights groups advocating for a law to protect women from domestic violence,³¹⁸ a draft Anti-Domestic Violence Law has been pending since 2012,³¹⁹ being strongly opposed in parliament on the grounds that it would go against Islam, 'national values' and would be 'incompatible with Iraqi culture'.³²⁰ In September 2023, the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee for Women, Family, and Child Affairs formally requested the Speaker to withdraw the draft law from the agenda for further review, based on the assertion that the draft law 'does not conform to religious and moral values, societal norms, and Iraqi constitutional principles'.

In 2011, KRG adopted a law on combating domestic violence,³²¹ criminalising physical, sexual, psychological violence, spousal rape and female genital mutilation³²² and in 2015 repealed Article 409 of the Penal Code.³²³ Despite these reforms, tangible progress towards protecting women against violence over the past two decades in the KRI has been limited,³²⁴ and violence is in fact reported to be high³²⁵ and on the rise.³²⁶

Violence against women in Iraq has continued to remain a serious³²⁷ and pervasive problem.³²⁸ Although reliable statistics are not available,³²⁹ violence committed by family members to protect the 'honour' of the family or tribe³³⁰ is reported to be widespread and to occur across the whole country on a daily basis, regardless of ethno-religious background.³³¹ Violations of honour that contravene tribal social norms and that can spark honour-based violence against a woman can be due to a range of reasons, including seeking a partner of her own choosing,³³² seeking divorce against the will of the family or tribe, showing disobedient behaviour to male relatives, elderly female relatives, or husband, being a survivor of sexual assault or rape.³³³

³¹⁸ CIVICUS, IRAQ: 'We've submitted many bills, but parliament refuses to adopt a law against GBV', 7 March 2022, [url](#); HRW, World Report 2024, Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

³¹⁹ UNAMI/OHCHR, Accountability for Domestic violence in Iraq: Promoting justice and non-discrimination, 7 March 2024, [url](#), p. 7

³²⁰ Al Jazeera, As Iraq backslides on gender equality, where are its women MPs?, 9 September 2023, [url](#)

³²¹ UNAMI/OHCHR, Accountability for Domestic violence in Iraq: Promoting justice and non-discrimination, 7 March 2024, [url](#), p. 7

³²² Hardi, C., The backlash against women's rights in Iraq's Kurdistan region, Chatham House, 14 April 2023, [url](#)

³²³ UNAMI/OHCHR, Accountability for Domestic violence in Iraq: Promoting justice and non-discrimination, 7 March 2024, [url](#), p. 7

³²⁴ Hardi, C., The backlash against women's rights in Iraq's Kurdistan region, Chatham House, 14 April 2023, [url](#)

³²⁵ Rudaw, No 2021 Court Cases of Femicides Settled in Sulaimani: Local NGO, 21 June 2022, [url](#); SEED

Foundation, Statement Condemning Violence Against Women in Kurdistan, 22 February 2022, [url](#)

³²⁶ Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, Terms of Reference: Report on Family-Based Violence Legislation in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, 2 August 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, Two Arrested in Erbil after Woman Falls from Apartment, 18 November 2023, [url](#)

³²⁷ BTI, 2022 Country Report Iraq, 23 February 2023, [url](#), p. 14

³²⁸ Abdo G., Violence Against Women Permeates All Aspects of Life in Iraq, Wilson Center, 29 November 2022, [url](#); USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 50

³²⁹ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2022, 27 July 2022, [url](#), p. 9; UNAMI/OHCHR, Accountability for Domestic violence in Iraq: Promoting justice and non-discrimination, 7 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

³³⁰ CFRI, Women's Economic Empowerment in Iraq: A Double-Edged Sword?, 8 November 2023, [url](#)

³³¹ Assafir Al-Arabi, In Iraq, Violence Against Women Comes in many Shapes and Forms, 4 August 2022, [url](#); LSE, Violence Against Women in Iraq: Between Practice and Legislation, 8 July 2020, [url](#)

³³² Hamoudi, H. A et al., The Resolution of Disputes in State and Tribal Law in the South of Iraq, 2015, [url](#); p. 240

³³³ Norway, Landinfo, Temanotat: Irak - Ære og æresrelatert vold [Thematic Note: Iraq - Honour and Honour Related Violence in Iraq and Kurdistan], 10 March 2022, [url](#), pp. 19-20; 13-14



During the reference period of this report, several cases of honour-based killing of women³³⁴ have occurred, which have sparked public debate³³⁵ as well as protests across the country calling for laws to protect women from violence.³³⁶ The KRI in particular saw an increase in reports of women killed by male relatives, for reasons such as converting to a different religion, or identifying as transgender women.³³⁷ For more detailed information on honour-based violence against women in Iraq see [EUAA COI Report Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023](#).

Violence against women and girls is mostly perpetrated with impunity across the country.³³⁸ Cases of domestic violence are underreported owing to various factors, including social stigma, fear of reprisal, survivor-blaming and prioritisation of family reconciliation by authorities, as well as negative attitudes displayed by officials towards survivors.³³⁹ Effective state protection remained severely limited,³⁴⁰ including with regards to access to shelter and justice,³⁴¹ with reports of some women survivors of trafficking being tried and convicted for prostitution.³⁴² Perpetrators of gender-based violence³⁴² are rarely prosecuted.³⁴³ Lawyers assisting women victims of domestic violence are reported to be at risk of harassment.³⁴⁴

There are 16 family protection units established by the government at police stations across the country.³⁴⁵ These units,³⁴⁶ however, lack the capacity to support survivors and prioritise family reconciliation over protection. A limited number of protection centres (shelters) were established by the government in Karbala, Anbar, Qadisiya and Kirkuk governorates³⁴⁷ but their service provision is reported to be inadequate.³⁴⁸ Several secret shelters are run by a

³³⁴ AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#); BBC, The Iraqi YouTube star killed by her father, 6 September 2023, [url](#) Channel 4 News, Iraqi Youtuber killed by father in 'honour killing', via YouTube, 4 February 2023, [url](#); AI, Iraq: Action must be taken on gender-based violence after murder of Tiba Ali by her father, 3 February 2023, [url](#)

³³⁵ Al Jazeera, As Iraq backslides on gender equality, where are its women MPs?, 9 September 2023, [url](#)

³³⁶ New Arab, Iraqi women still live the legacy of gender-based violence, 8 March 2023, [url](#)

³³⁷ AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

³³⁸ HRW, World Report 2024, Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#); UNAMI/OHCHR, Accountability for Domestic violence in Iraq: Promoting justice and non-discrimination, 7 March 2024, [url](#), p. 13; Alshamary, M., Interview with Al Jazeera, The Stream, Why hasn't Iraq adopted any laws against domestic violence?, 15 February 2023, [url](#), minutes 1:19 - 1:37; 8:38 – 9:50

³³⁹ UNAMI/OHCHR, Accountability for Domestic violence in Iraq: Promoting justice and non-discrimination, 7 March 2024, [url](#), p. 2

³⁴⁰ AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

³⁴¹ UNAMI/OHCHR, Accountability for Domestic violence in Iraq: Promoting justice and non-discrimination, 7 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 11-14

³⁴² HRW, World Report 2024, Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

³⁴³ HRW, Interview with EUAA, 16 March 2023, originally cited in EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#)

³⁴⁴ MENA Rights Group, Iraqi Human Rights Lawyer Mohammed Jumaa Facing Disciplinary Proceedings, 20 October 2022, [url](#); USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#)

³⁴⁵ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 51

³⁴⁶ Such units are overseen by the Directorate of Family and Child Protection against Domestic Violence (DFCPDV), which was established in 2009 under the Ministry of Interior. The DFCPDV consists of police units specialised on investigating cases of domestic violence. See: UNAMI/OHCHR, Accountability for Domestic violence in Iraq: Promoting justice and non-discrimination, 7 March 2024, [url](#), p. 2

³⁴⁷ UNAMI/OHCHR, Accountability for Domestic violence in Iraq: Promoting justice and non-discrimination, 7 March 2024, [url](#), p. 11

³⁴⁸ UNAMI/OHCHR, Accountability for Domestic violence in Iraq: Promoting justice and non-discrimination, 7 March 2024, [url](#), p. 11; USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Iraq, 15 June 2023, [url](#); AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)



local NGO in Baghdad and other cities.³⁴⁹ These underground houses often face criticism, and are also subjected to raids and attacks by security forces, armed actors, family and tribal members.³⁵⁰ NGO representatives reported to be ostracised,³⁵¹ monitored and restricted in their work.³⁵² For instance, NGOs in Baghdad have been harassed, including by being summoned for questioning following complaints from members of parliament.³⁵³ Women hosted in these shelters have reportedly received death ‘sentences’ from members of their tribes.³⁵⁴

NGOs reported that women feared approaching the family protection units and reporting the crimes they faced due to fear of retaliation,³⁵⁵ suspecting police officers of informing their families. In southern Iraq, some tribal leaders reportedly banned their members from approaching police family protection units, claiming that domestic abuse was a family matter. In the KRI, there are four shelters overseen by the government and additional two shelters for women fleeing domestic violence run by local NGOs.³⁵⁶ Admission to government-run shelters, both in Federal Iraq and the KRI, requires a police report and a judicial order, which means that formal legal proceedings must be initiated against the perpetrator.³⁵⁷

Sexual violence

Iraqi law criminalises rape and sexual assault of women, men, and children.³⁵⁸ However, except for the KRI,³⁵⁹ it does not specifically mention spousal rape. There is no clear definition of ‘consent’, leaving the interpretation up to the judges.³⁶⁰ The penal code also permits perpetrators of rape or sexual assault to avoid prosecution or have their sentences suppressed if they marry their victim.³⁶¹ Sometimes families of the survivors agree with such arrangement to avoid social stigma associated with rape. Reliable data on the occurrence of rape and information on the effective enforcement of the law are not available.³⁶² Women and girls are reported to be at risk of rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated by state and non-state actors, also in circumstances of internal displacement and return³⁶³ and in detention.³⁶⁴

³⁴⁹ OWFI, Sheltering, accessed 28 January 2024, [url](#); GI-TOC, 2023 Global Organized Crime Index: Iraq, September 2023, [url](#), p. 6

³⁵⁰ HRW, World Report 2024, Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); UNGA, Situation of Human Rights Defenders: Note by the Secretary-General, A/78/131, 7 July 2023, [url](#), para. 82

³⁵¹ Cortright, D., et al., Women and the Iraq war, 20 years later, Fourth Freedom Forum, 2023, [url](#)

³⁵² Mohammed, Y., Two decades of feminist struggle in post-invasion Iraq, Chatham House, 14 June 2023, [url](#), p. 72

³⁵³ AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

³⁵⁴ Mohammed, Y., Two decades of feminist struggle in post-invasion Iraq, Chatham House, 14 June 2023, [url](#), p. 72

³⁵⁵ UNAMI/OHCHR, Accountability for Domestic violence in Iraq: Promoting justice and non-discrimination, 7 March 2024, [url](#), p. 10

³⁵⁶ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 52

³⁵⁷ Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, Researcher for Report on Family-Based Violence Legislation in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, 2 August 2023, [url](#), pp. 1-2

³⁵⁸ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 50

³⁵⁹ Hardi, C., The backlash against women's rights in Iraq's Kurdistan region, Chatham House, 14 April 2023, [url](#)

³⁶⁰ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 50

³⁶¹ HRW, World Report 2024, Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 50

³⁶² USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 50

³⁶³ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 39; UNICEF, Humanitarian Action for Children 2023: Iraq, 5 December 2022, [url](#), p. 2; UNDP, Challenges for the Return and Reintegration of Women and Children, October 2022, [url](#), p. 23

³⁶⁴ UNPD, Affiliated with ISIS, October 2022, [url](#), p. 56



Conflict-related sexual violence

The 2021 law for survivors of the ISIL violence³⁶⁵ does not include specific provisions related to the status of women survivors of sexual violence, nor of children born of rape.³⁶⁶ During 2022, 914 families displaced by the 2014 conflict returned to their places of origin in Iraq, as part of the process of return of Iraqi nationals from Al Hol camp in Syria. Of these, 70 % were female-headed households. These women are reported to face stigma and challenges to reintegrate in the community.³⁶⁷ Members of the Yazidi communities themselves³⁶⁸ often forced Yazidi survivors who had children born of rape to leave their children behind in Syria; in some cases, they were forced to place them in institutional care.³⁶⁹ (See also [1.4 Children](#)). Those who refused to leave their children behind are reported to have faced expulsion from the community and also honour killings.³⁷⁰ Yazidi women who had children born of rape are reported to be required by the government to register those children as Muslims and convert to Islam themselves to obtain identification cards, passports, and other governmental services.³⁷¹ See also [1.1.3 Individuals with \(perceived\) affiliation to ISIL](#).

Forced marriage

Despite being criminalised,³⁷² including in the KRI, the practices of traditional early and forced marriages of women and girls³⁷³ have continued to occur.³⁷⁴ The law sets the minimum age for marriage at 18, but it also allows a judge to permit girls as young as 15 to marry ‘if fitness and physical capacity are established and the guardian does not present a reasonable objection’³⁷⁵ or if the marriage is considered ‘an urgent necessity’ by the judge.³⁷⁶ The minimum age for marriage in the KRI can be lowered to 16 with approval by a legal guardian and authorisation by a judge.³⁷⁷ Unregistered marriages (conducted by religious leaders but not registered with the Personal Status Court),³⁷⁸ also called temporary³⁷⁹ or pleasure marriages (*Nikah Mut’ah*), have continued to be practiced with support of clerics. Such temporary arrangements are reported to be widely misused for sexual exploitation,

³⁶⁵ UN news, Iraq: ‘Moral obligation’ to ensure justice for Yazidi and other survivors of ISIL crimes, 30 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁶⁶ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 41

³⁶⁷ UNSC, Conflict-related sexual violence, S/2023/413, 22 June 2023, [url](#), para.37; Australia, DFAT, Country Information Report Iraq, 16 January 2023, [url](#), p. 18

³⁶⁸ New York Times (The), ISIS Forced Them Into Sexual Slavery. Finally, They’ve Reunited With Their Children, 12 March 2021, [url](#); Rudaw, Yazidi spiritual leaders clarify children of ISIS rape won’t be accepted, 27 April 2019, [url](#)

³⁶⁹ UNSC, Conflict-related sexual violence, S/2023/413, 22 June 2023, [url](#), para.15, 37

³⁷⁰ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#); Australia, DFAT, Country Information Report Iraq, 16 January 2023, [url](#), p. 18

³⁷¹ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

³⁷² HRW, ‘Everyone Wants Me Dead’, 23 March 2022, [url](#)

³⁷³ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 61; UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2021, 26 April 2022, [url](#), p. 18

³⁷⁴ HRW, ‘My Marriage was Mistake after Mistake’, 3 March 2024, [url](#), p. 12; UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2021, 26 April 2022, [url](#), p. 18

³⁷⁵ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 61

³⁷⁶ ILHR, Legislative Review: Draft Law on Child Protection, May 2023, [url](#), p. 9

³⁷⁷ IRAQ-KRI, Amended Personal Status Law, as applicable in the KR-I (Law No. 15 of 2008), available at: [url](#), Art. 5; UNFPA, Child marriage in Kurdistan Region -Iraq, 12 August 2016, [url](#), p. 52

³⁷⁸ HRW, World Report 2024, Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

³⁷⁹ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 61



prostitution,³⁸⁰ trafficking³⁸¹ and as a way to circumvent legal restrictions on child, forced marriage and polygamy, or avoid paying spousal maintenance in case of divorce. The impact of unregistered/temporary marriages on women's rights is described as significant. Lacking civil status, women in unregistered marriages face severe obstacles in accessing social protection and government services.³⁸²

Although less common than unregistered marriages,³⁸³ the tribal practice of *fasliya*, (whereby women and girls are traded as part of the tribal settlement of a dispute³⁸⁴ 'as compensation for injury or death')³⁸⁵ continue to exist,³⁸⁶ especially in areas where tribal influence is stronger than government institutions.³⁸⁷ In 2022, Iraqi journalist Dima Yassine mentions *fasliya* customs still occurring daily in Iraq.³⁸⁸ Women who are subjected to *fasliya* have no right to divorce, are exposed to abuse,³⁸⁹ and mistreatment.³⁹⁰ The practice of *nahwa*, whereby a male cousin is entitled to marry his female cousin or decide on whom she can marry³⁹¹ is reported to remain a problem, particularly in southern provinces.³⁹² Such practices are said to be a 'concealed phenomenon' that is not discussed publicly.³⁹³ For more detailed information on *fasliya*, *nahwa* and other practices impacting women within the context of tribal customary laws and practice see [EUAA COI Report Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023](#).³⁹⁴

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)

FGM/C has been criminalised in the KRI³⁹⁵ under the Domestic Violence Act in 2011 but not in Federal Iraq.³⁹⁶ Outside the KRI, FGM/C is reported as not common. While it has continued to

³⁸⁰ NIRIJ-Daraj, "Pleasure Marriage:" Thinly Veiled Legal Prostitution, 24 March 2023, [url](#)

³⁸¹ UN Human Rights Committee, Concluding Observations on the 6th Periodic Report, 16 August 2022, [url](#), para.28

³⁸² HRW, World Report 2024, Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); HRW, "My Marriage was Mistake after Mistake", 3 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 1, 11, 28

³⁸³ HRW, "My Marriage was Mistake after Mistake", 3 March 2024, [url](#)

³⁸⁴ HRW, Interview with EUAA, 13 March 2023; OWFI, Interview with EUAA, 16 March 2023; Ceasefire for Civilian Rights, Correspondence with EUAA, 16 March 2023, originally cited in EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#); Tawfiq Marwan, M., Forced Marriages In Tribal Iraq: A Case Study From Kirkuk, May 2019, [url](#), p. 6-7, 18; USDOS, 2016 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Iraq, March 3, 2017, [url](#), p. 52

³⁸⁵ UNHCR, Tribal Conflict Resolution in Iraq, 15 January 2018, [url](#), p. 2

³⁸⁶ Genat, M., interview with EUAA, 4 October 2022; OWFI, Interview with EUAA, 13 March 2023; Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, Correspondence with EUAA, 13 March 2023; HRW, Interview with EUAA, 16 March 2023, originally cited in EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#); Yassine, D., Iraqi women: Resisting oppression in an afflicted country, 16 January 2022, [url](#)

³⁸⁷ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 54

³⁸⁸ Yassine, D., Iraqi women: Resisting oppression in an afflicted country, 16 January 2022, [url](#)

³⁸⁹ UNHCR, Tribal Conflict Resolution in Iraq, 15 January 2018, available at: [url](#), p. 2; Al-Obaidi, B., Interview with EUAA, 3 April 2023, originally cited in EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#)

³⁹⁰ USIP, Customary Justice and the Rule of Law in War-Torn Societies, 1 July 2011, [url](#), p. 264; Al-Obaidi, B., Interview with EUAA, 3 April 2023

³⁹¹ Genat, M., Interview with EUAA, 4 October 2022; OWFI, Interview with EUAA, 13 March 2023, originally cited in EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#)

³⁹² USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 54

³⁹³ Al-Obaidi, B., Interview with EUAA, 3 April 2023, originally cited in EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#)

³⁹⁴ EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#)

³⁹⁵ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 53

³⁹⁶ IILHR, Legislative Review: Draft Law on Child Protection, May 2023, [url](#), p. 9; UN Human Rights Committee, Concluding Observations on the 6th Periodic Report, 16 August 2022, [url](#), para. 38



decline in the KRI,³⁹⁷ it is still practiced in some rural communities.³⁹⁸ Its prevalence in the KRI is reported higher in the governorates of Sulaymaniyah and Erbil (where 47 % of women aged between 15-49 are subjected to FGM/C), while in Dohuk it is reported as rare.³⁹⁹

1.3.2. Women without male support

Women without the support of a male member of their family or tribe⁴⁰⁰ often face stigmatisation from their families and from society;⁴⁰¹ they are vulnerable to economic insecurity and at a higher risk of sexual exploitation and trafficking.⁴⁰² In spite of this, divorce rates in Iraq, including in the KRI,⁴⁰³ have seen an increase in recent years and divorced women still face stigma and discrimination,⁴⁰⁴ including risk of losing their rights to child custody, property rights and financial support;⁴⁰⁵ they are also exposed to economic hardship and sexual harassment.⁴⁰⁶ Divorced and widowed women are reported to be exposed to sexual exploitation also through so called temporary or pleasure marriages.⁴⁰⁷

Women who escaped domestic violence without their legal identification documents face challenges in having these documents replaced. As a result, they face obstacles in registering for their residence card (which is required to rent a house and secure a job), obtaining birth certificates for their children, as well as in moving around.⁴⁰⁸ Female-headed households,⁴⁰⁹ widows and single women⁴¹⁰ also face additional obstacles, including legal impasses, in obtaining security clearance and/or documentation for themselves or their children.⁴¹¹ Commonly, women without a male support continued to experience a delay of more than one year to obtain their own citizenship documentation.⁴¹²

³⁹⁷ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 53

³⁹⁸ Wadi, Annual Report 2022, 6 May 2023, [url](#), p. 6; Rudaw, FGM Persists in the Kurdistan Region Despite Ban, 6 February 2022, [url](#)

³⁹⁹ Iraq/KRI, Population analysis report, February 2021, [url](#), p. 46; FGM/C Research Initiative, Iraqi Kurdistan, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁰⁰ WAS Iraq, Women Working in Iraq: Shame, Control, as Part of a Working Woman's Life, 17 August 2022, [url](#); France24, In Iraq, divorce rates soar even as stigma persists for women, 19 October 2022, [url](#); Howe K. et al., Circumscribed Lives: Separated, Divorced, and Widowed Female Youth in South Sudan and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Tufts University, August 2022, [url](#), p. 11-13

⁴⁰¹ Howe K. et al., Circumscribed Lives: Separated, Divorced, and Widowed Female Youth in South Sudan and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Tufts University, August 2022, [url](#), p. 23; CREID, Violence and Discrimination Against Women of Religious Minority Backgrounds in Iraq, 6 December 2022, [url](#), p. 140

⁴⁰² USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 72; CREID, Violence and Discrimination Against Women of Religious Minority Backgrounds in Iraq, 6 December 2022, [url](#), pp. 140, 303

⁴⁰³ Asharq Al-Awsat, Official Data: Divorce Rates Soar in Kurdistan, 1 March 2019, [url](#); Kurdistan 24, Iraq records over 6,000 divorce cases in one month, 3 April 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁴ AA, Iraq's divorce rate steadily mounting: Judicial source, 31 January 2018, [url](#); France24, In Iraq, divorce rates soar even as stigma persists for women, 19 October 2022, [url](#); USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁵ Al Menasa, No Waiver, no Divorce: Half of Iraqi Women Blackmailed into the Worst Deal, when Leaving Marriage, 31 March 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁶ Kurdistan 24, Iraq records over 6,000 divorce cases in one month, 3 April 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁷ NIRIJ-Daraj, "Pleasure Marriage:" Thinly Veiled Legal Prostitution, 24 March 2023, [url](#); Shafaq, Temporary marriage in Iraq: economic pressures, legal controversies, and societal dynamics, 21 May 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁸ HRW, Trapped – Iraq, 18 July 2023, [url](#), pp. 42-47

⁴⁰⁹ IRC, Iraq Protection Needs Overview: Monitoring and Trends (April – September 2022), 11 January 2023, [url](#), p. 11; SIDA, Multidimensional Poverty Analysis Iraq 2022, April 2022, [url](#), p. 33

⁴¹⁰ USDOS, 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 30 March 2021, [url](#), p. 60

⁴¹¹ UNDP, Challenges for the Return and Reintegration of Women and Children, October 2022, [url](#); p. 20, DRC, Women, Displacement and Durable Solutions in Iraq, 8 March 2023, [url](#)

⁴¹² USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 21



A significant number of returnees, who are ISIL-affiliated or perceived as such, are female-headed households.⁴¹³ Women with suspected affiliation to ISIL members are reported to have been routinely denied by Iraqi security officers clearance needed to obtain identity cards, passports, and other documents.⁴¹⁴ Obtaining identity cards and access to services continued to be a problem for women with children born of rape.⁴¹⁵ These women are also subject to higher risk of sexual exploitation, retaliation, and suicide.⁴¹⁶ (See also [1.1.3 Individuals with \(perceived\) affiliation to ISIL](#) and [1.3.2 Conflict-related sexual violence](#)).

Women living independently face obstacles⁴¹⁷ due to prevailing social, religious and cultural norms. For instance, single women in Iraq experience difficulties trying to rent a house, since living alone for a woman is not socially accepted. Speaking to Human Rights Watch, some organisations reported that hotels do not allow adult Iraqi women to check into a room alone unless they are either accompanied by a male guardian (i.e. brother, father, or husband) or can provide an official letter from a governmental institution or NGO stating the reason for their stay (e.g. business, attending a conference, etc.).⁴¹⁸ Although the situation of single women is described as generally better in the KRI compared to the rest of Iraq, conservative attitudes and traditional norms create several challenges for single women in the KRI as well, including difficulties in living on their own, obtaining civil documents, accessing jobs. Single women are also exposed to verbal and sexual harassment.⁴¹⁹

1.4. Children

Iraqi federal law⁴²⁰ foresees that men may discipline their wives and children ‘within certain limits prescribed by law or by custom’. Although reliable statistics are not available, violence against children is reported to be a significant problem.⁴²¹ Authorities, both in Federal Iraq and the KRI, often treated children and adolescents who were sexually exploited and trafficked as criminals instead of victims, by prosecuting and sentencing some of these children for prostitution.⁴²² In June 2023, the Iraqi parliament introduced a draft child protection law, which, if passed, would address issues such as child labour, exploitation, and abuse. While being described as ‘a vital step’ towards protecting children’s rights,⁴²³ some provisions of the draft law are said to be vague, some in contravention of the articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, with omissions also noted regarding envisioned protections, particularly

⁴¹³ Cook J., Distinguishing Children from ISIS-Affiliated Families in Iraq and their Unique Barriers for Rehabilitation and Reintegration, *Perspective on Terrorism*, Vol. XVII, Issue 3, September 2023, [url](#), p. 58; UNSC, Conflict-related sexual violence, S/2023/413, 22 June 2023, [url](#), para.37

⁴¹⁴ HRW, Trapped – Iraq, 18 July 2023, [url](#), pp. 42-47

⁴¹⁵ UNSC, Conflict-related sexual violence, S/2021/312, 30 March 2021, [url](#), p. 6

⁴¹⁶ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 41

⁴¹⁷ WAS Iraq, Women Working in Iraq: Shame, Control, as Part of a Working Woman’s Life, 17 August 2022, [url](#)

⁴¹⁸ HRW, Trapped – Iraq, 18 July 2023, [url](#), pp. 42-47

⁴¹⁹ Denmark DIS/DRC, Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI): Issues regarding single women, documents and illegal exit March 2023, [url](#) pp. 7-19

⁴²⁰ Iraq, Penal Code, No. 111 of 1969, July 1969, [url](#), Art. 41 (1); see footnote 312 of this report.

⁴²¹ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 50

⁴²² USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 61-62; USDOL, 2021 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Iraq, 28 September 2022, [url](#), p. 6

⁴²³ HRW, World Report 2024, Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)



for girls.⁴²⁴ By the time of writing, the draft law remained pending.⁴²⁵ Children in Iraq have continued to be affected by conflict-related violence, including being killed or injured by improvised explosive devices (IED) and explosive remnants of war (ERW).⁴²⁶

1.4.1. Child recruitment by armed groups

Efforts have been made by the government to prevent child recruitment.⁴²⁷ Nonetheless, some instances of child recruitment by armed groups were reported. The UN verified a total of 32 cases of children (18 boys and 14 girls, as young as age 11) being recruited in 2022: 28 of whom were recruited by the People's Defence Forces of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (HPG/PKK) and 4 by ISIL. These children were used in combat and at checkpoints. The UN also reported some cases of abduction of children for recruitment and sexual exploitation. In June 2023, the UN reported to have conditionally delisted the PMF for the violation of recruitment and use of children. This decision was based on a decrease in this violation by these groups and based on pending implementation of an action plan against child recruitment signed by the Iraqi government, UNAMI and UNICEF.⁴²⁸ Young boys who were formerly recruited and who suffer from complex trauma or other medical conditions⁴²⁹ often do not have access to adequate rehabilitation, reintegration and mental health programmes, which exposes them to re-victimisation and re-recruitment.⁴³⁰

1.4.2. Children with perceived affiliation to ISIL

Children perceived to be affiliated with ISIL are reported to be subject to arbitrary arrests, detention, and enforced disappearance.⁴³¹ As at December 2022, UN verified that 936 children (927 boys, 9 girls) remained in detention on national security-related charges, including for their actual or alleged affiliation with armed groups, mostly ISIL.⁴³² Some of the children detained are as young as 9 years old,⁴³³ being 9 the minimum age of criminal

⁴²⁴ IILHR, Legislative Review: Draft Law on Child Protection, May 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁴²⁵ HRW, Iraq: Reforms Needed to Entrench Stability, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴²⁶ UNSC, Implementation of Resolution 2682 (2023), S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 55; UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2682 (2023), S/2024/96, 25 January 2024, [url](#), para. 58, 59

⁴²⁷ OSRSG Children and Armed Conflict, UN Special Representative of Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict Concludes Official Visit to Iraq, 11 January 2024, [url](#), p. 1

⁴²⁸ UNGA/SC, Children and Armed Conflict in Iraq: Report of the Secretary-General, A/77/895-S/2023/363, 5 June 2023, [url](#), para. 71, 74, 76, 344

⁴²⁹ SEED Foundation, Can We Build a Brighter Future for Children Exploited by War?, 9 February 2022, [url](#); Sunday Times, Kidnapped, Drugged and Forced to Fight: The Forgotten Child Victims of ISIS, 16 July 2022, [url](#)

⁴³⁰ GI-TOC, 2023 Global Organized Crime Index: Iraq, September 2023, [url](#), p. 6; USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Iraq, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

⁴³¹ IOHR, Forced Disappearances in Iraq: Around 12,000 Reports of Missing Persons in the Last Six Years, 30 August 2023, [url](#), p. 6; UN CED, Information on the Visit and Findings, 31 March 2023, [url](#), paras 23, 24, 25; HRW, Submission to the UN Human Rights Committee, 25 January 2022, [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Iraq, 15 June 2023, [url](#); UN, Committee on Enforced Disappearances, Report of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances on its visit to Iraq under article 33 of the Convention, 19 April 2023, [url](#), para. 31

⁴³² UNGA/SC, Children and Armed Conflict in Iraq: Report of the Secretary-General, A/77/895-S/2023/363, 5 June 2023, [url](#), para. 72

⁴³³ UNDP, Challenges for the Return and Reintegration of Women and Children, October 2022, [url](#), p. 57; UNGA/SC, Children and Armed Conflict in Iraq: Report of the Secretary-General, A/77/895-S/2023/363, 5 June 2023, [url](#), para. 72; IILHR, Legislative Review: Draft Law on Child Protection, May 2023, [url](#), p. 22



responsibility in Federal Iraq (while in the KRI has been amended to 11).⁴³⁴ Children are reported to be imprisoned in overcrowded juvenile facilities,⁴³⁵ or, in some cases, together with adults.⁴³⁶ Children have been arrested based on ‘dubious’ evidence and forced confessions,⁴³⁷ with limited access to legal remedies, prolonged pretrial detention and subjected to ill-treatments.⁴³⁸ Children in detention on charges of ISIL affiliation in Ninewa are reported to experience extremely poor conditions in overcrowded prison cells.⁴³⁹ Although the use of torture is explicitly outlawed in Iraq, the disciplinary system allows for children to be held in solitary confinement up to seven days, and allows removal of privileges such as family visits. Instances of torture towards children were reported across Iraq and the KRI, in particular to extract confessions,⁴⁴⁰ and during criminal hearings interrogation.⁴⁴¹

Children, who make up the majority of the population across IDPs and returnees from Al Hol camp, face stigma due to their perceived association with ISIL and may face barriers in accessing education and other services.⁴⁴² Most of these children are in fact denied access to civil documentation needed to access education and other services.⁴⁴³ See also [1.1.3 Individuals with \(perceived\) affiliation to ISIL](#).

Children born to Yazidi women raped by ISIL have allegedly been subjected to enforced disappearances upon their mothers’ return to Iraq.⁴⁴⁴ Yazidi women are reported to have often been forced to leave their children behind in Syria, and in some cases to place them in orphanages.⁴⁴⁵ A UN Delegation visiting Iraq in November 2022 was informed of cases where Yazidi women were not able to take their children back from orphanages, being told that their children had been ‘given’ to another family, with the alleged involvement of state agents. Civil society organisations told the UN Committee that these children are usually sold.⁴⁴⁶ By law,⁴⁴⁷ children born to a Yazidi mother as a result of ISIL violence are considered to be of ‘unknown’

⁴³⁴ UN CAT, Concluding Observations on the Second UN Periodic Report of Iraq, CAT/C/IRQ/CO/2, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 26

⁴³⁵ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#)

⁴³⁶ UNSC, Children and Armed Conflict in Iraq: Report of the Secretary-General, S/2022/46, 26 January 2022, [url](#), para. 27

⁴³⁷ HRW, Children as ISIS Suspects, 17 February 2022, [url](#)

⁴³⁸ UNSC, Children and armed conflict in Iraq, Report of the Secretary-General, 26 January 2022, [url](#), p. 6, para. 27

⁴³⁹ HRW, Submission to the Committee Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Punishment Ahead of the Review of the Republic of Iraq 73rd Session: March 2022; 7 April 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁰ UNICEF, Mapping and Assessment of the Child Justice System in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, November 2022, [url](#), p. 26; Freedom House, Freedom in the world 2023 Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁴¹ UNAMI/OHCHR, Trials under the anti-terrorism laws and implications for justice, accountability and social cohesion in the aftermath of ISIL, 2020), [url](#), p. 8-9

⁴⁴² United Nations University, UNIDIR, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Children from Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation: Experiences from Iraq and Al Hol, [url](#), p. 7; War on the Rocks, Living In The Shadows: Iraq’s Remaining Displaced Families, 3 February 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁴³ AI, Iraq: Legacy of Terror: The Plight of Yazidi Child Survivors of ISIS, 30 July 2020, [url](#), pp. 33-34; Rowaq Arabi, Born of ISIS Genocide: Risk of Statelessness and Stigmatised Nationality Acquisition for Children of Yazidi Survivors, 26 August 2020, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁴ UN CED, Report of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances on its visit to Iraq under article 33 of the Convention, 19 April 2023, [url](#), para. 31

⁴⁴⁵ UNSC, Conflict-related sexual violence, S/2023/413, 22 June 2023, [url](#), para. 15, 37

⁴⁴⁶ UN CED, Report of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances on its visit to Iraq under article 33 of the Convention, 19 April 2023, [url](#), para. 31, 25, footnote 40

⁴⁴⁷ Iraq, National Card Law No. (3) of 2016, 2016, [url](#), art. 20(2)



paternity, and they are registered as ‘Muslims’.⁴⁴⁸ In fact, most of these children are denied access to civil documentation.⁴⁴⁹ A local media outlet reported that, in some cases, children born of rape are registered on their national ID card under the name of their mother’s father or other male relatives from their mother’ side.⁴⁵⁰ These children are reported to be vulnerable to retribution or ‘honour’ killings, and to be discriminated against within the Yazidi communities, as Yazidis do not consider these children as belonging to their communities.⁴⁵¹ Human Rights Watch researcher Sarah Sanbar said that the problem of children born of rape to Yazidi women enslaved or forced into marriage with ISIL fighters remains a particularly sensitive issue within the Yazidi community, forcing many women to choose between remaining displaced with their children, or returning to their families without their children.⁴⁵²

1.4.3. Children without civil documentation

Numerous children are prevented from or face obstacles in obtaining official documents.⁴⁵³ These include children born out of wedlock, of unregistered marriages,⁴⁵⁴ children born as a result of ISIL violence or forced marriage⁴⁵⁵ (see [1.1.3 Civil documentation and security clearance](#)), and displaced children.⁴⁵⁶ Lack of birth certificates and other key civil documents⁴⁵⁷ limit children’s access to government services and social protection, including enrolment to school,⁴⁵⁸ access to healthcare, housing, employment and social safety nets.⁴⁵⁹ Additionally, these children face restrictions of movement,⁴⁶⁰ and are subject to stigmatisation, abuse and

⁴⁴⁸ IBA, Justice and Accountability for the Atrocities of Daesh, 1 March 2023, [url](#), p. 4; Save the Children, Yazidi Children still Living in Fear 8 Years after Genocide, 22 September 2022, [url](#); USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 21

⁴⁴⁹ Al, Iraq: Legacy of Terror: The Plight of Yazidi Child Survivors of ISIS, 30 July 2020, [url](#) pp. 33-34; Rowaq Arabi, Born of ISIS Genocide: Risk of Statelessness and Stigmatised Nationality Acquisition for Children of Yazidi Survivors, 26 August 2020, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁰ Rudaw, Iraqi children born to ISIS fathers denied IDs, cannot enroll in school, 23 October 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁵¹ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 30

⁴⁵² Sanbar S., email communication with EUAA, 16 March 2024

⁴⁵³ DRC, Life in the Margins, September 2022, [url](#), p. 3; USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 41

⁴⁵⁴ HRW, “My Marriage was Mistake after Mistake”, 3 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 30-31; USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 21; Kirkuk Now, My Name is My Mother’s, Campaign for Thousands of Children, 9 January 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁵ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 21; UNSC, Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: Report of the Secretary-General, S/2023/413, 22 June 2023, [url](#), para. 37; Rudaw, Iraqi Children Born to ISIS Fathers Denied IDs, Cannot Enroll in School, 23 October 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁶ SEED Foundation, World Children’s Day: To Establish Flourishing Communities, Today and in the Future, we Must Protect the Rights of every Child, 20 November 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁷ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 41

⁴⁵⁸ HRW, World Report 2024, Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World’s Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁹ HRW, World Report 2024, Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); NRC, The Unmet Needs of Iraq’s Children in Informal Settlements, September 2022, [url](#), pp. 18-10; UNHCR, Access to Civil Documentation by IDPs and IDP Returnees in Iraq: 2022-2023, 24 August 2022, [url](#), p. 1

⁴⁶⁰ DRC, Life in the Margins, September 2022, [url](#), p. 14; UNHCR, Access to Civil Documentation by IDPs and IDP Returnees in Iraq: 2022-2023, 24 August 2022, [url](#), p. 1



abandonment.⁴⁶¹ Children who lack birth certificates in Iraq are reported to be stateless⁴⁶² or at risk of becoming stateless.⁴⁶³

1.4.4. Child exploitation and child marriage

Almost half of Iraqi children (47 % or 8.7 million) are reported to live in multidimensional⁴⁶⁴ poverty.⁴⁶⁵ In 2022, Iraq ‘made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour’, which is reported as widespread,⁴⁶⁶ and on the rise.⁴⁶⁷ Some children are trafficked for forced labour, including forced begging, and commercial sexual exploitation.⁴⁶⁸ IDP and returnee children,⁴⁶⁹ undocumented children, children with disabilities,⁴⁷⁰ as well as children of women without male support are reported to be particularly prone to different forms of exploitation, including child labour, forced and/or child marriage, sexual exploitation, and trafficking.⁴⁷¹

Rates of child marriage have steadily increased over the past 20 years, exacerbating the exposure to sexual and domestic violence.⁴⁷² Child marriage is reported to be socially accepted across the country,⁴⁷³ and instances of child marriages occur throughout Iraq among all ethnic and religious groups at high rates.⁴⁷⁴ According to a 2021 study by the Ministry of

⁴⁶¹ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 30; UN News, New Iraqi Law ‘Major Step’ in Assisting ISIL’s Female Victims but more Must Be Done, 21 April 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁶² USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 41

⁴⁶³ UNSC, Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: Report of the Secretary-General, S/2022/272, 29 March 2022, [url](#), para. 33; UNDP, Challenges for the Return and Reintegration of Women and Children, October 2022, [url](#), p. 19; UNHCR, Access to Civil Documentation by IDPs and IDP Returnees in Iraq: 2022-2023, 24 August 2022, [url](#), p. 1

⁴⁶⁴ The World Bank defines the Multidimensional Poverty Measure (MPM) as ‘an index that measures the percentage of households in a country deprived along three dimensions –monetary poverty, education, and basic infrastructure services – to capture a more complete picture of poverty. A means to capture the complexity of poverty that considers dimensions of well-being beyond just monetary poverty.’ See World Bank, Multidimensional Poverty Measure, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁶⁵ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, p. 20, cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#), p. 73 footnote 524; UNICEF, Country Office Annual Report 2022, 15 February 2023, [url](#), pp. 1, 6

⁴⁶⁶ USDOL, 2022 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Iraq, 26 September 2023, [url](#), pp. 568-569

⁴⁶⁷ IRC, High Child Labor Rates in Iraq Continue to Disrupt Children’s Education, Childhood and Basic Rights, the IRC Warns, 23 December 2022, [url](#); i24 News, Poverty, War in Iraq Causes Sharp Spike in Child Labor, 1 March 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, Over 1,000 Children Working in Sulaimani, Halabja Provinces: KRG Minister, 12 June 2023, [url](#); France24/AFP, Wars, Poverty Fuel Spike in Iraqi Child Labour, 1 March 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁸ USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Iraq, 15 June 2023, [url](#); EPC, Iraqi Children, Crisis of Conflict, and the Dysfunctional Education System, 6 July 2022, [url](#); USDOL, 2021 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Iraq, 28 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁹ IRC, Protection Needs Overview April 2023 – September 2023, 10 December 2023, [url](#), pp. 8-10

⁴⁷⁰ USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Iraq, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁷¹ CREID, Violence and Discrimination Against Women of Religious Minority Backgrounds in Iraq, 6 December 2022, [url](#), pp. 51-52, 384; Howe K. et al., Circumscribed Lives: Separated, Divorced, and Widowed Female Youth in South Sudan and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Tufts University, August 2022, [url](#), p. 23; USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Iraq, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁷² HRW, World Report 2024, Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷³ WVI, Empowered Women, Empowered Children, April 2022, [url](#), p. 27

⁴⁷⁴ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, p. 24, cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#), p. 162 footnote 1164; HRW, World Report 2024, Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)



Planning and the Central Statistical Organization, 25.5 % of married women in Iraq were married before the age of 18, and 5.2 % of women were married before 15.⁴⁷⁵

1.4.5. Access to education

Primary education enrolment in Iraq stands at over 90 %, but enrolment rates in intermediate and higher education levels are significantly lower.⁴⁷⁶ Almost 3.2 million school-aged children are reported to be out of school in Iraq, including approximately half of all displaced children.⁴⁷⁷ There are several barriers faced by Iraqi children in accessing education, including lack of sufficient educational facilities, use of schools as shelters by IDPs, costs of transportation and supplies, displacement.⁴⁷⁸ Access to education is effectively impeded to children lacking civil documentation,⁴⁷⁹ children forced to work,⁴⁸⁰ children with disabilities.⁴⁸¹ Girls face additional barriers in accessing education due to socio-cultural norms,⁴⁸² while girls forced into marriage are *de facto* excluded from accessing education.⁴⁸³ In some conflict-affected areas, access to education for children is further hampered by continued insecurity⁴⁸⁴ as well as reported destruction of schools and other infrastructure⁴⁸⁵ and use of schools for military purposes by armed groups.⁴⁸⁶ See also [1.1.3 Individuals with \(perceived\) affiliation to ISIL](#).

1.5. LGBTIQ

Consensual same-sex relations between adults are not expressly prohibited by the Iraqi Penal Code.⁴⁸⁷ However, the authorities have used a range of vaguely worded provisions to discriminate against and criminally prosecute lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and

⁴⁷⁵ Iraq CSO/KRSO, Iraqi Women Integrated Social and Health Survey (IWISH2), 1 April 2021, [url](#), p. 9

⁴⁷⁶ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, pp. 10, 24, cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#), p. 83 footnote 610; UNICEF, Iraq: Country Office Annual Report 2022, 7 March 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁴⁷⁷ IOM, IOM Welcomes Decisions by Directorates of Education in Salah al Din and Ninewa to Protect Children's Right to Education, 27 February 2022, [url](#); IRC, Protection Needs Overview April 2023 – September 2023, 10 December 2023, [url](#), p. 13

⁴⁷⁸ USDOL, 2022 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Iraq, [url](#), p.568

⁴⁷⁹ AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#); DRC, Life in the Margins, 14 September 2022, [url](#), p. 15

⁴⁸⁰ USDOL, 2022 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Iraq, [url](#), pp. 568-569

⁴⁸¹ Mercy Hands, Rapid Assessment: Understanding the Funding Challenges, Education Needs and Aspirations of Institutes for Children with Disabilities in Basra, Iraq – November 2022, 16 January 2023, [url](#), p. 4

⁴⁸² IRC, Protection Needs Overview April 2023 – September 2023, 10 December 2023, [url](#), p. 10; WVI, Empowered Women, Empowered Children, April 2022, [url](#), p. 27; UNDP, Community-Based Reconciliation & Reintegration in Iraq, 28 June 2022, [url](#), p. 18; CREID, Violence and Discrimination Against Women of Religious Minority Backgrounds in Iraq, 6 December 2022, [url](#), pp. 51, 107, 118, 182, 238-239

⁴⁸³ Stites E., et al., Life after Marriage: An Analysis of the Experiences of Conflict-Affected Female Youth who Married under Age 18 in South Sudan and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Tufts University, 23 May 2022, [url](#), p. 10; Manara Magazine, 'With Education you Can Face Every Struggle': Gendered Higher Education in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan – Part One: Living in Darkness, 21 February 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁴ Rudaw, Fearing ISIS, Dozens of Kurdish Schools Remain Shut in Makhmour, 24 October 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁵ The Kurdish Centre for Studies, SOS: Turkey is destroying Rojava's civilian infrastructure, 14 October 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁶ UNGA/SC, Children and Armed Conflict in Iraq: Report of the Secretary-General, A/77/895-S/2023/363, 5 June 2023, [url](#), para. 75; HRW, Iraq: Political Infighting Blocking Reconstruction of Sinjar, 6 June 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁷ Iraq, Penal Code, No. 111 of 1969, July 1969, [url](#)



queer individuals (LGBTIQ), on grounds such as public indecency and prostitution.⁴⁸⁸ In August 2023, a draft amendment to Iraq's Anti-Prostitution Law (Law No. 8 of 1988) was introduced,⁴⁸⁹ foreseeing the criminalisation of consensual same sex relations with the death penalty or life imprisonment,⁴⁹⁰ 'promoting homosexuality' with a minimum seven years in prison and a fine and 'imitating women' with up to a three-year sentence.⁴⁹¹ The law was passed by the Iraqi parliament on 27 April 2024.⁴⁹²

In August 2023, the Iraqi Communications and Media Commission issued a directive ordering all media outlets to replace the term 'homosexuality' with the term 'sexual deviance', and banning the use of the term 'gender'.⁴⁹³ In September 2022, members of the Kurdistan regional parliament had introduced the 'Bill on the Prohibition of Promoting Homosexuality,' which, if passed, would punish any individuals or groups advocating for LGBTIQ rights.⁴⁹⁴

Both men and women face harassment, abuse by family members or state actors, and detention for not conforming to traditional appearance or behaviour that is perceived to match their biological sex.⁴⁹⁵ For instance, in September 2023, blogger Noor Al Saffar was killed by an unknown gunman, likely due to Al Saffar's social media posts dressed in women's clothing.⁴⁹⁶ Sources noted an escalation of anti-LGBTIQ sentiments,⁴⁹⁷ with violence and discrimination against LGBTIQ individuals⁴⁹⁸ described as 'rampant'.⁴⁹⁹ In a 2022 report, Human Rights Watch documented killings, abductions, torture, and sexual violence against LGBTIQ individuals perpetrated by armed groups in Iraq.⁵⁰⁰ Armed actors and law enforcement officers have perpetrated violence with impunity towards LGBTIQ individuals.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁸⁸ HRW, Iraq: Scrap Anti-LGBT Bill, 23 August 2023, [url](#); HRW, 'Everyone Wants Me Dead', 23 March 2022, [url](#), p. 3

⁴⁸⁹ UNSC, Implementation of Resolution 2682 (2023): Report of the Secretary-General, S/2023/700, 26 September 2023, [url](#), para. 17

⁴⁹⁰ UN OHCHR, Iraq: UN Human Rights alarmed by draft law with death penalty for same-sex relations, 9 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹¹ HRW, Iraq: Scrap Anti-LGBT Bill, 23 August 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁹² Reuters, Iraq criminalises same-sex relationships with maximum 15 years in prison, 27 April 2024, [url](#); AP, Passage of harsh anti-LGBTQ+ law in Iraq draws diplomatic backlash, 28 April 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹³ HRW, Iraq: Scrap Anti-LGBT Bill, 23 August 2023, [url](#); Al, Iraq: Authorities must immediately reverse media ban on the terms "homosexuality" and "gender", 9 August 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁴ HRW, Iraq: Scrap Anti-LGBT Bill, 23 August 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁵ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁶ GCHR, GCHR's 30th Periodic Report on Human Rights Violations in Iraq, 9 November 2023, [url](#); Sanbar S., email communication with EUAA, 16 March 2024

⁴⁹⁷ ABC News, Iraq's LGBT Community Could Face Death Penalty under Proposed New Law, 16 September 2023, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2023: Iraq, 4 October 2023, [url](#); AP, Influential Iraqi cleric launches anti-LGBTQ campaign, 2 December 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁸ OutRight International, What it Means to Be a Queer Woman, 23 February 2022, [url](#), p. 20

⁴⁹⁹ HRW, Iraq: Impunity for Violence Against LGBT People, 23 March 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁰ HRW, 'Everyone Wants Me Dead', 23 March 2022, [url](#), pp. 1-4

⁵⁰¹ HRW, Iraq: Scrap Anti-LGBT Bill, 23 August 2023, [url](#); HRW, Iraq: Impunity for Violence Against LGBT People, 23 March 2022, [url](#)



1.6. Individuals perceived as transgressing moral and religious norms

As a result of clan customs and tribal traditions, abuses and killings within the Iraqi society occur on grounds of ‘the wash of shame’.⁵⁰² Mostly women,⁵⁰³ and to a lesser extent men,⁵⁰⁴ can be subjected to honour-based killings, being perceived to have transgressed cultural, social or religious norms, and brought shame to their family.⁵⁰⁵ (See also [1.3.1 Domestic and honour-based violence](#)). Sources reported attacks against people perceived to contravene these rules due to dress⁵⁰⁶ or social behaviour,⁵⁰⁷ as well as converts,⁵⁰⁸ members of religious minority groups,⁵⁰⁹ atheists and secular-minded individuals,⁵¹⁰ LGBTIQ individuals.⁵¹¹ People contravening gender roles through dress or same-sex relationships are considered to have damaged honour of family and tribe,⁵¹² violated national values, and promoted ‘moral decay’.⁵¹³ An intensified anti-LGBTIQ campaign has been carried out by the government since 2023, based on the argument – among others – that LGBTIQ issues are an import from Western countries.⁵¹⁴ (See also [1.5 LGBTIQ](#)).

Tribal actors committing honour-based violence are reported to be allowed to act with impunity in Iraq, not only when it comes to women’s issues but in general.⁵¹⁵ A US-based Iraq analyst told the EUAA that this is also the case in the KRI, where political connections can, in practice, provide impunity to perpetrators of tribal or clan violence. Also, in the KRI

⁵⁰² Al-Obaidi, B. S. H., The impact of legislation on empowering women. A comparative study between the effective Iraqi Penal Code No. 111 of 1969 and the new draft Iraqi Penal Code, *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, Vol. 6 No. 2, 2022, [url](#), p. 6146

⁵⁰³ Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, Correspondence with EUAA, 16 March 2023; OWFI, Interview with EUAA, 16 March 2023, originally cited in EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#); Australia, DFAT, Country Information Report Iraq, 16 January 2023, [url](#), p. 30

⁵⁰⁴ UNHRC, Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions on her mission to Iraq, 5 June 2018, [url](#), para. 40; Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights/MRGI, The Lost Women of Iraq: Family-based violence during armed conflict, October 2015, [url](#), p. 26; Rudaw, Trans Woman Killed by Brother, Perpetrator Flees Country, 2 February 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁵ AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#); Hamoudi, H. A et al., The Resolution of Disputes in State and Tribal Law in the South of Iraq, 2015, [url](#); p. 240; Australia, DFAT, Country Information Report Iraq, 16 January 2023, [url](#), pp. 30-31

⁵⁰⁶ LBC, Shocking Footage Shows Male Mob Attacking Girl, 17, for Dressing ‘Immodestly’ at Iraqi Motorcycle Show, 4 January 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁷ DW, Iraqi Kurdistan: 16 Arrested after Video of Girl's Assault, 31 December 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁸ Al-Samarai, N., Interview with EUAA, 27 October 2022, originally cited in EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#); Open Doors, Iraq: Full Country Dossier, January 24, 2022, [url](#), pp. 24, 31

⁵⁰⁹ Open Doors International, World Watch List 2024: Iraq, January 2024, [url](#), pp. 1-8; USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#); CREID, Violence and Discrimination Against Women of Religious Minority Backgrounds in Iraq, 6 December 2022, [url](#), pp. 185, 297

⁵¹⁰ Australia, DFAT, Country Information Report Iraq, 16 January 2023, [url](#), p. 22; DW, When Atheism is Life-Threatening, 20 December 2018, [url](#); AP, Fearing ostracism or worse, many nonbelievers hide their views in the Middle East and North Africa, 5 October 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹¹ HRW, ‘Everyone Wants Me Dead’, 23 March 2022, [url](#), p. 21

⁵¹² HRW, ‘Everyone Wants Me Dead’, 2022, [url](#), pp. 70-72; Sanbar S., email communication with EUAA, 16 March 2024

⁵¹³ Al Jazeera, As Iraq Backslides on Gender Equality, Where Are Its Women MPs?, 9 September 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹⁴ DW, Iraq debates law on death penalty for same-sex relationships, 7 September 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹⁵ Alshamary, M., Interview with Al Jazeera, The Stream, Why hasn't Iraq adopted any laws against domestic violence?, 15 February 2023, [url](#), minutes 1:19 - 1:37; 8:38 – 9:50



increasingly more people are reported to solve their issue through tribal justice mechanism.⁵¹⁶ (For more information on the impact of Iraqi tribal customary laws and practices on certain groups and individuals see [EUAA COI Report Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023](#)).

In January 2023, an online platform was launched by the Iraqi government for monitoring and reporting 'indecent content' on social media⁵¹⁷ that, according to authorities, 'violates public morals, customs and traditions, and is disrespectful towards military institutions', and 'undermines the values of the Iraqi family.'⁵¹⁸ However, researcher at Human Rights Watch, Sarah Sanbar, informed EUAA that the platform was blocked a few months after its launch and that it remains blocked by the time of drafting this report.⁵¹⁹ Media sources reported that, soon after the platform was launched, 14 people were charged for publishing 'indecent' or 'immoral' content on social media, six of whom were already sentenced to prison terms ranging between six months to two years.⁵²⁰ Among those targeted for violating public moral and decency⁵²¹ were people who posted videos of music deemed provocative (such as TikTok pop music influencers),⁵²² dance moves, modelling fashion clothes,⁵²³ comedy and sarcastic commentary, language deemed obscene, or raised sensitive social issues such as gender-related topics.⁵²⁴ Sources noted that such crackdown is part of a broader campaign by the government to repress dissent,⁵²⁵ especially among a more secular-minded young generation which tries to defy traditional norms of Iraqi conservative society. In some neighbourhoods of the capital Baghdad, for instance, it is possible to see some young Iraqi men and women wearing jeans and sneakers, listening to music, taking music or dance classes. These individuals are however reported to be wary of criticism or targeting by conservative sections of society or militias connected to political parties.⁵²⁶ The ban of the term 'gender' and the order to replace the term 'homosexuality' with the term 'sexual deviance' in August 2023⁵²⁷ has reportedly had an impact on the work of academics and staff at humanitarian organisations. Some gender-studies courses at universities had to be suspended, while NGO workers have been warned to avoid using the term in their activities.⁵²⁸

⁵¹⁶ US-based Iraq analyst, Interview with EUAA 12 December 2023, and email communication 4 March 2024

⁵¹⁷ Al, Iraq: Open Letter to Prime Minister Al-Sudani: End Iraq's Reign of Impunity, 15 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹⁸ Iraqi New Agency, Ministry of Interior: Forming a committee to monitor content on social media, 16 January 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹⁹ Sanbar S., email communication with EUAA, 16 March 2024

⁵²⁰ Al, Iraq: Open Letter to Prime Minister Al-Sudani: End Iraq's Reign of Impunity, 15 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵²¹ Library of Congress, Iraq: Authorities Arrest Two Social Media Creators for Indecency and Publishing 'Degrading Content' on TikTok, 9 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵²² France24/AFP, TikTokers jailed as Iraq targets 'decadent content', 16 February 2023, [url](#)

⁵²³ New York Times, As Iraq Tries to Chill Critics, Its Newest Target Is Social Media, 16 July 2023, [url](#); Article 19, Iraq: Authorities must cease their chilling crackdown on free speech, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵²⁴ AP, Iraq's crackdown on booze, social media posts raises alarm, 10 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵²⁵ New York Times (The), As Iraq Tries to Chill Critics, Its Newest Target Is Social Media, 16 July 2023, [url](#)

⁵²⁶ AP, 20 years after U.S. invasion, young Iraqis see signs of hope, 17 March 2023, [url](#); Guardian (The), Baghdad's young people battle to build happier future – picture essay, 12 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵²⁷ HRW, Iraq: Scrap Anti-LGBT Bill, 23 August 2023, [url](#); Al, Iraq: Authorities must immediately reverse media ban on the terms "homosexuality" and "gender", 9 August 2023, [url](#)

⁵²⁸ Al Jazeera, As Iraq Backslides on Gender Equality, Where Are Its Women MPs?, 9 September 2023, [url](#)



1.6.1. Individuals selling/consuming alcohol

As of March 2023, Iraq's government announced it would start enforcing⁵²⁹ a 2006 law banning alcohol⁵³⁰ which prohibits the import, sale, and manufacture of all alcoholic beverages.⁵³¹ Under Islamic law, alcohol is proscribed in Iraq and licenses to sell alcohol have only been issued to non-Muslims. While drinking in public is not prohibited,⁵³² it is said to be frowned upon.⁵³³ In most areas of Iraq, including in the KRI, selling, buying and consuming alcohol is widely seen as immoral. The charge of being an alcohol seller attaches a stigma to someone, by reason even of ethnic or religious identity. However, 'quite a lot of Iraqis' are said to consume alcohol.⁵³⁴ For instance, on the banks of the Tigris River in the capital Baghdad, it is not unusual to see young people drinking alcohol.⁵³⁵ The enforcement of the ban raised concerns among many residents in the city of Baghdad and among minority groups,⁵³⁶ as the majority of shops selling alcohol are owned by members of religious minorities.⁵³⁷ (See also [1.2 Ethnic and religious minorities](#)). Prior to the enforcement of the ban, attacks targeting alcohol selling shops were reported.⁵³⁸ According to ACLED, since 2020 there has been an escalation of attacks against alcohol store sellers by PMF militias. Between October 2021 and February 2022, over 35 attacks mostly involving the targeting of liquor stores with IEDs were recorded.⁵³⁹ Sabeen-Mandean, Yazidis, and Christians who own stores with alcohol sales licenses reported being blackmailed and attacked by PMF militias.⁵⁴⁰

Following the enforcement of the ban in March 2023, local sources reported that a number of liquor shops were raided and forced to close, with owners arrested in central Baghdad.⁵⁴¹ Except for the KRI, which has not enforced the ban, prohibition of alcohol import was reported to be enforced at border crossings, however many liquor stores across Iraq are said to continue business as usual.⁵⁴² In March 2024, a US-based Iraq analyst informed the EUAA that alcohol was widely available in the KRI, but also in Federal Iraq despite the restrictions.⁵⁴³ Similarly, Sarah Sanbar, researcher at HRW, told the EUAA that both in the KRI and in Baghdad alcohol shops as well as restaurants selling alcohol were still open and serving alcohol by the time of drafting this report. The same source additionally stated that, prior to the enforcement of the alcohol ban, it was common, in rural or less urban areas, for

⁵²⁹ AP, Iraq's crackdown on booze, social media posts raises alarm, 10 March 2023, [url](#); BBC, Iraq Alcohol Ban: Christian Political Party Appeals, Saying it Is Undemocratic, 6 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵³⁰ AP, Iraqi parliament passes bill banning alcohol, 23 October 2016, [url](#); BBC, Iraq Alcohol Ban: Christian Political Party Appeals, Saying it Is Undemocratic, 6 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵³¹ Rudaw, Alcohol ban worries locals in Baghdad, 18 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵³² Reuters, Iraq starts enforcing 2016 ban on alcoholic beverages -document, 6 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵³³ Lattimer, M., originally cited in EASO COI Report, Targeting of Individuals, March 2019, [url](#), p. 85; Reuters, Iraq starts enforcing 2016 ban on alcoholic beverages -document, 6 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵³⁴ Lattimer, M., originally cited in EASO COI Report, Targeting of Individuals, March 2019, [url](#), p. 85

⁵³⁵ Reuters, Iraq starts enforcing 2016 ban on alcoholic beverages -document, 6 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵³⁶ AP, Iraq's crackdown on booze, social media posts raises alarm, 10 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵³⁷ Rudaw, Alcohol ban worries locals in Baghdad, 18 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵³⁸ Hatha Alyoum, Liquor Depot Blasted in Al-Diwaniyah, 16 June 2022, [url](#); NINA, Explosion of a Shop Selling Alcoholic Drinks in the Tourist Resort of Babylon, 11 June 2022, [url](#); NINA, Unidentified Persons Demolished a Store for Selling Alcoholic in Diwaniyah, 13 April 2022, [url](#)

⁵³⁹ ACLED, The Muqawama and its Enemies, 23 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁰ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 20

⁵⁴¹ NINA, A Number of Violating Liquor Store Owners Arrested in Central Baghdad, 28 March 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, Nearly 200 arrested in raid on Baghdad gambling halls, 18 April 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁴² AP, Iraq's crackdown on booze, social media posts raises alarm, 10 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁴³ US-based Iraq analyst, Interview with EUAA 12 December 2023, and email communication 4 March 2024



alcohol vendors to ask for one's ID, as they would only sell to those whose ID does not have 'Muslim' listed on it. However, the source did not have any information on whether this has changed following the enforcement of the ban. Sanbar further added that the 'general feeling is that the ban was enacted as political theatre rather than a serious desire to ban alcohol'.⁵⁴⁴

1.6.2. Converts and atheists

Besides being prohibited under the Personal Status Law,⁵⁴⁵ religious conversion from Islam to Christianity or other religions is socially taboo in Iraq, and ill-perceived by society and tribal groups.⁵⁴⁶ A study outsourced by the organisation Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA) showed that, due to the strong connection between ethnic affiliation and religion, atheism can be perceived as a 'denial of ethnic identity'.⁵⁴⁷ (See also [1.2 Ethnic and religious minorities](#)). Although conversion does occur in Iraq, converts opt to hide their conversion to Christianity or any other religion. Converts might be expelled from the territory upon decision of tribal leaders, sometimes with support of their own family,⁵⁴⁸ they might face challenges in seeking a job, buy/rent an apartment or deal with authorities, for instance in obtaining documentations and certificates.⁵⁴⁹ Converts from Muslim background experience pressure,⁵⁵⁰ ostracism and discrimination,⁵⁵¹ especially from family and community members.⁵⁵² The KRI in particular saw an increase in reports of women killed by male relatives, including for reasons such as converting to a different religion.⁵⁵³ An expert on Iraqi tribes told the EUAA that converting from one religion to any other is 'a red line' for all tribes in Iraq, be it from Islam to Christianity or Christianity to Islam: 'from the perspective of religion, it provides a permission to kill since the person has become an infidel. This is the general code among all the tribes, among all ethnicities and all religions.'⁵⁵⁴ (For more information on the treatment of Muslim converts within the context of Arab tribes see [EUAA COI Report Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023](#)). If suspected of carrying out outreach among Muslims, Christian converts might be accused of blasphemy. Violations against converts are reported to be more prevalent in Arab than Kurdish areas.⁵⁵⁵

Harassment and violence against atheists by family members, religious and militia groups are reported to occur.⁵⁵⁶ Agnostics, atheists and non-believers generally do not publicly disclose

⁵⁴⁴ Sanbar S., email communication with EUAA, 16 March 2024

⁵⁴⁵ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 6; Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#); Open Doors International, World Watch List 2024: Iraq, January 2024, [url](#), p. 7

⁵⁴⁶ Al-Samaraie, N., Interview with EUAA, 27 October 2022, originally cited in EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#), p. 72; Open Doors, Iraq: Full Country Dossier, January 24, 2022, [url](#), p. 24, 31

⁵⁴⁷ JISRA, JISRA in Iraq, August 2022, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁴⁸ Al-Ibrahimi, H., Interview with EUAA, 27 October and 3 November 2022, originally cited in EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#), p. 73

⁵⁴⁹ Finland, FIS, Kristityt, ateistit ja islamista luopuneet Irakissa, May 18, 2022, [url](#), p. 16

⁵⁵⁰ Open Doors International, World Watch List 2024: Iraq, January 2024, [url](#), pp. 3, 4, 6

⁵⁵¹ RFI, Country Overview Iraq, March 2023, [url](#), p. 4

⁵⁵² Open Doors International, World Watch List 2024: Iraq, January 2024, [url](#), pp. 3, 4, 6; RFI, Country Overview Iraq, March 2023, [url](#), p. 4;

⁵⁵³ AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁴ Al-Ibrahimi, H., Interview with EUAA, 3 November 2022, originally cited in EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#), p. 74

⁵⁵⁵ Open Doors International, World Watch List 2024: Iraq, January 2024, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁵⁶ DW, When Atheism is Life-Threatening, 20 December 2018, [url](#); Australia, DFAT, Country Information Report Iraq, 16 January 2023, [url](#), p. 18



their believes due to stigma from society and out of fear of being targeted⁵⁵⁷ by family members, vigilantes and conservative and hardline religious groups.⁵⁵⁸ Despite the lack of official statistics, atheism is reported to be on the rise in Iraq.⁵⁵⁹

1.6.3. Individuals in inter-sect/inter-faith marriages

Reliable figures on the prevalence of mixed marriages are not available.⁵⁶⁰ Notwithstanding exceptional cases, marriages between Sunni and Shia Muslims are reported to be common and not controversial in Iraq, especially in demographically mixed areas like the capital Baghdad.⁵⁶¹ In areas that experienced continued tensions between Sunnis and Shias (e.g. in Tal Afar, in the Ninewa governorate),⁵⁶² mixed marriages among these communities may not be accepted. For instance, in the Ninewa Plains inter-sect marriages are reported to be no longer accepted due to the tension between Shia and Sunni Shabaks, as a result of ISIL's targeting of Shia Shabaks.⁵⁶³ Intolerance towards inter-sect/inter-faith marriage might also occur in circumstances when one spouse is a member of a tribe with perceived affiliation to ISIL, or perceived 'honour' violations (such as the perception that the couple engaged in sex prior to wedlock, or if they marry in violation of their families' wishes). Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men risk stigmatisation, exclusion, and, in extreme cases, honour killing if they proceed with the marriage against their families' wishes.⁵⁶⁴ In situations where families do not approve inter-faith marriage (e.g. between a Muslim and a Christian or a Sunni and a Shia), both men and women might be subjected to honour killings, although women are more likely to be victim of this practice. In some cases, it is also possible that a clan or a tribe will punish a member (especially a woman) for engaging in a mixed marriage, for instance by expelling the person from the tribe.⁵⁶⁵ Some minority communities, including Sabeen-Mandeans⁵⁶⁶ and Yazidis, do not permit their members to marry outside their faith, with repercussions against those breaking the religious norms,⁵⁶⁷ including stigmatisation, exclusion, and, in extreme

⁵⁵⁷ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Iraq (covering facts of 2022), 2023, [url](#); AP, Fearing ostracism or worse, many nonbelievers hide their views in the Middle East and North Africa, 5 October 2023, [url](#);

⁵⁵⁸ Humanists International, Iraq, last updated 28 October 2020, [url](#); Arab Weekly, Iraq's Growing Community of Atheists no Longer Peripheral, 20 July 2019, [url](#); DW, When Atheism is Life-Threatening, 20 December 2018, [url](#); USCIRF, Country Update Iraq, September 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁵⁹ Graczyk, A., Atheism and the Changing Image of Islam in Iraq, Review of Nationalities, nr 10/2020, 18 May 2021, [url](#), p. 174; USCIRF, Country Update Iraq, March 2022, [url](#), p. 2

⁵⁶⁰ US-based Iraq analyst, email communication to EUAA, 4 March 2024; Sanbar S., email communication to EUAA, 16 March 2024

⁵⁶¹ BBC, 'Sushi' children defy Sunni-Shia divide, 18 June 2016, [url](#); Canada, IRB, Iraq: Inter-Sect Marriage Between Sunni and Shia Muslims, Including Prevalence; Treatment of Inter-Sect Spouses and their Children by Society and Authorities, Including in Baghdad; State Protection Available (2016-January 2018), 29 January 2018, [url](#)

⁵⁶² Action Against Hunger, Drivers of Conflict and Community Tensions in Post-War Iraq, 5 May 2023, [url](#), p. 12

⁵⁶³ SIPRI, Post-Conflict Reconstruction in the Nineveh Plains of Iraq: Agriculture, Cultural Practices and Social Cohesion, November 2022, [url](#), p. 20; Action Against Hunger, Conflict sensitivity assessment in Ninewa, 27 January 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁴ Sanbar S., email communication with EUAA, 16 March 2024

⁵⁶⁵ Lattimer, M., originally cited in EASO COI Meeting Report – Iraq, 25-26 April 2017, [url](#), p. 24; Canada, IRB, Iraq: Inter-Sect Marriage Between Sunni and Shia Muslims, Including Prevalence; Treatment of Inter-Sect Spouses and their Children by Society and Authorities, Including in Baghdad; State Protection Available (2016-January 2018), 29 January 2018, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁶ CREID, Violence and Discrimination Against Women of Religious Minority Backgrounds in Iraq, 6 December 2022, [url](#), pp. 160, 167

⁵⁶⁷ JISRA, JISRA in Iraq, August 2022, [url](#), p. 3; Manara Magazine, Addressing the Challenges Facing Iraq's Yazidi Community in 2022, 17 March 2022, [url](#)





cases, honour killing.⁵⁶⁸ According to Al-Samaraie, an expert on tribes in Iraq, there are cases of Christian women who marry Muslim men who have been banished by their families due to social pressure.⁵⁶⁹ (See also [1.2 Ethnic and religious minorities](#)).

⁵⁶⁸ Sanbar S., email communication with EUAA, 16 March 2024

⁵⁶⁹ Al-Samaraie, N., Interview with EUAA, 27 October 2022, originally cited in EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#)





2. Key socio-economic indicators for Baghdad and Sulaymaniyah

2.1. Country overview

1.1.1. Socio-economic situation

Iraq is experiencing rapid population growth, with an estimated population of 43 million in 2023 and predictions of a population surge to 74.5 million by 2050.⁵⁷⁰ After the sharp recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Iraq's economy rapidly recovered in 2022 thanks to increase in oil-selling, resulting in accelerated GDP growth.⁵⁷¹ In the first quarter of 2023, GDP growth however decelerated to 2.6 %.⁵⁷² Iraq is economically one of the most oil-dependent countries in the world, with its national revenue heavily reliant on selling oil.⁵⁷³ This makes its economy vulnerable to fluctuations of oil prices and global demand.⁵⁷⁴ Corruption and inequality in the distribution of national income in oil economy⁵⁷⁵ are considered among the country's main problems and the root causes for political, social and economic issues which have fuelled several anti-government protests.⁵⁷⁶

Unemployment⁵⁷⁷ and poverty are high across the country and large sections of the population.⁵⁷⁸ According to latest available data, in 2021, Iraq's unemployment rate was 16.5 %, with a higher rate among women (28.2 %) compared to men (14.7 %). Youth unemployment rate stood at 35.8 %.⁵⁷⁹ The lack of job opportunities, especially among young people, has been a frequent trigger for social unrest⁵⁸⁰ and migration.⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁰ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, p. 10 cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#), p. 67, footnote 473

⁵⁷¹ World Bank, Iraq Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, 31 July 2023, [url](#), pp. ix-x, 1; IMF, Iraq: 2022 Article IV Consultation-Press Release; and Staff Report, 3 February 2023, [url](#), p. 5

⁵⁷² World Bank, Iraq Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, 31 July 2023, [url](#), pp. ix-x, 1

⁵⁷³ ISPI, Iraq's Economy: Old Obstacles and New Challenges, 17 March 2023, [url](#); Qardaghi O., The unequal distribution of income within an oil economy - Iraq as a case study, CFRI, 18 January 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁴ ECFR, From Shock and Awe to Stability and Flaws: Iraq's Post-Invasion Journey, 25 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁵ AP, Corruption, Deep Disparity Mark Iraq's Oil Legacy post-2003, 24 March 2023, [url](#); Prospect, Iraq: The Fallout, 1 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁶ Qardaghi O., The unequal distribution of income within an oil economy - Iraq as a case study, CFRI, 18 January 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁷ World Bank, Iraq Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, 31 July 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁵⁷⁸ ISPI, Iraq's Economy: Old Obstacles and New Challenges, 17 March 2023, [url](#); UNSC, Implementation of Resolution 2631 (2022): Report of the Secretary-General, S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 64

⁵⁷⁹ ILO/CSO/KRSO, Iraqi Labour Force Survey 2021, 5 July 2022, [url](#), pp. 6, 15

⁵⁸⁰ ILO, Cost of Inaction: Education Deprivation in Iraq and the Potential of Social Protection to Reverse it, 7 March 2023, [url](#), p. 7; RFI/AFP, Iraq's Young Covet Govt Jobs in Headache for Economy, 2 October 2022, [url](#); UNDP, Reimagining the Social Contract in Iraq, 12 June 2022, [url](#), pp. 17, 19

⁵⁸¹ Rudaw, Kurdistan Region's Youth Blame Lack of Opportunities for Desire to Migrate, 6 September 2023, [url](#); Euronews/AFP, Scarred by War, Young Iraqis Describe the Twenty Years after 'Shock and Awe', 25 March 2023, [url](#); CFRI, The Root Causes of Kurdish Iraqi Migration: Early Warnings of an Impending Youth Quake in the KRI, 13 July 2022, [url](#); WFP, Prospects for Resilience amid Fragility: Conflict Analysis of Al-Qurna and Al-Dair Districts in Basra Governorate, March 2022, [url](#), p. 6



A country highly dependent on food imports,⁵⁸² Iraq has continued to significantly rely on import of rice, wheat, and flour to supply citizens with subsidised food from the Public Distribution System (PDS).⁵⁸³ Due to the devaluation of the Iraqi dinar in December 2020, prices for some imported essential foods rose.⁵⁸⁴ Along with the poor rainfall season of 2020-2021,⁵⁸⁵ the Ukraine-Russia war has exacerbated the food security situation in Iraq, being the two countries key suppliers of food, energy, and agricultural inputs globally.⁵⁸⁶ As of 1 August 2023, 1.2 million people in Iraq were living with insufficient food consumption and 2.5 million were in a situation of 'crisis or above crisis level food-based coping strategies'.⁵⁸⁷ The governorates with the highest prevalence of insufficient food consumption, in order of severity, were: Anbar, Najaf, Salah al-Din, Baghdad, Basrah, Kerbala, Muthanna, Babil, Dahuk, Ninewa, Thi-Qar, Kirkuk.⁵⁸⁸

Due to a range of factors, including primarily corruption, underinvestment and neglect by the government⁵⁸⁹ - as well as pressure caused by rapid population growth,⁵⁹⁰ and the effect of climate change⁵⁹¹ - access to basic services such as clean water, electricity, healthcare and education is deemed insufficient.⁵⁹² In June 2023, Iraq's parliament approved its largest budget till date (\$153bn) aimed at improving services, rebuilding war-damaged infrastructure and creating public sector jobs.⁵⁹³ Despite these efforts, as a result of the economic and political situation, as well as weak governance and corruption,⁵⁹⁴ reconstruction has been uneven.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁸² World Bank, Iraq Economic Monitor, Fall 2019, [url](#), p. 22; WFP, Iraq Market Monitor, March 2022, [url](#), p. 2

⁵⁸³ USDA, Grain and Feed Annual Iraq, 18 May 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁸⁴ WFP, Iraq Annual Country Report 2020: Country Strategic Plan 2020-2024, 20 April 2021, [url](#), p. 7; FAO et al., Food Security in Iraq: Impact of COVID-19, with a Special Section on Water Shortages and Adaptation, 3 October 2021, [url](#), p. 28

⁵⁸⁵ WFP, Iraq; Annual Country Report 2022; Country Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024, 31 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁶ WFP, Iraq Market Monitor, March 2022, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁸⁷ The Hunger Map Live by the World Food Programme (WFP) tracks core indicators of acute hunger. As noted by the WFP: 'Acute hunger is measured by key indicators such as household food consumption, livelihood behaviors, child nutritional status, mortality, access to clean drinking water and other contextual factors. The HungerMap LIVE primarily tracks trends on household food consumption, consumption-based coping and livelihood changes to track multiple aspects of food insecurity. As these are outcome level 1 indicators in the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Framework, they can provide early indications of potential shifts in acute food insecurity.' WFP, Hunger Map Live: Iraq insight and key trends, 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁸⁸ WFP, Hunger Map Live: Iraq insight and key trends, 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁵⁸⁹ Mansour R., Rethinking Political Settlements in the Middle East and North Africa, Chatham House, 20 September 2023, [url](#), pp. 17-18; UNDP, Reimagining the Social Contract in Iraq, 12 June 2022, [url](#), pp. 24-25

⁵⁹⁰ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, p. 10 cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#), p. 67, footnote 473

⁵⁹¹ UNICEF, 2024 Humanitarian Action for Children, December 2023, [url](#), p. 2; Kirkuk Now, Nawjul Deserted for Poor Services and Effects of Climate Change, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹² UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, p. 16, cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#), p. 67, footnote 471; UNSC, Implementation of Resolution 2631 (2022): Report of the Secretary-General, S/2023/340, 11 May 2023, [url](#), para. 64; Mansour R., Rethinking Political Settlements in the Middle East and North Africa, Chatham House, 20 September 2023, [url](#), pp. 17-18

⁵⁹³ Al Jazeera, Iraq approves record \$153bn budget aimed at creating jobs, 12 June 2023, [url](#); EPC, Iraq Passes New Budget, but Old Problems Persist, 18 July 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁴ Washington Institute, What Could Iraqis Gain from Their Oil Windfall?, 18 November 2022, [url](#); UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2022, 27 July 2022, [url](#), p. 27

⁵⁹⁵ UNICEF, Humanitarian Action for Children 2024: Iraq, 12 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2; Kurdistan 24, Iraq's President Pledges Reconstruction in Nineveh, 28 December 2022, [url](#); IOM, No Way Home: An Assessment of Barriers to Sustainable Return and Reintegration in Locations of No Return, June 2022, [url](#)



The Iraqi public healthcare system has severely deteriorated over the past two decades and has continued to be largely in crisis, facing a range of serious challenges, including widespread corruption and poor governance. The quality and efficiency of the healthcare system as well as the accessibility to basic services remain poor and inadequate for most Iraqis, and especially for those economically marginalised.⁵⁹⁶ Along with the poor quality of medical services, major issues include also recurring shortages of medications,⁵⁹⁷ as well as the lack of medical equipment,⁵⁹⁸ and the lack of qualified health workers.⁵⁹⁹ Not all damaged or destroyed public health facilities in areas affected by conflict have been rehabilitated.⁶⁰⁰

Free public health services are only available for those holding valid civil documentation,⁶⁰¹ with limited access for those not holding ID documents.⁶⁰² A survey by REACH found, however, that there is no relationship between missing civil documentation and access to healthcare services, with the vast majority of households surveyed (94 %) reporting to be able to access healthcare facilities irrespective of their civil documentation status.⁶⁰³ The quality and availability of healthcare in the KRI is slightly better than in the rest of Iraq,⁶⁰⁴ however much of the capacity is concentrated in urban areas.⁶⁰⁵ Due to budget deficits at times health worker salaries have been delayed, with implications on the provision of medical services.⁶⁰⁶

Primary education enrolment in Iraq stands at over 90 %, but enrolment rates in intermediate and higher education levels are significantly lower.⁶⁰⁷ Illiteracy rates remain high in Iraq,⁶⁰⁸ especially among women.⁶⁰⁹ Overcrowded classrooms, insufficient number of qualified

⁵⁹⁶ Istepanian R., Mapping Iraq's Post-2003 Health Crisis: Two Decades of Retrogression and Kleptocracy, 31 January 2024, CFRI, [url](#); The National, Iraq's Fragmented Healthcare System 'at the Heart of the Struggle to Overcome War', 2 December 2022, [url](#); UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, p. 40, cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#), p. 80 footnote 581

⁵⁹⁷ Mansour R., Moving Medicine in Iraq: Networks Fuelling Everyday Conflict, Chatham House, 29 November 2022, [url](#); MSF, MSF Halts Key Medical Activities in Mosul Due to Administrative Obstacles, 5 July 2023, [url](#); KAS, Under Fire: How Corruption Erodes Healthcare in Iraq, December 2021, [url](#), p. 9

⁵⁹⁸ Qamar K., et al., Rise of Cholera in Iraq: A Rising Concern, in: Annals of Medicine and Surgery, Vol. 81 (2022), September 2022, [url](#), p. 2

⁵⁹⁹ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, p. 41, cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#), p. 80 footnote 586; The National, Staff Shortages Threaten Iraq's Health Sector amid Third Covid-19 Wave, 2 February 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁰ MSF, Iraq Activity Report 2022, 13 April 2023, [url](#), p. 13; UNFPA, Iraq: Reproductive and Maternal Health, accessed 14 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁰¹ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2021, 26 April 2022, [url](#), p. 72

⁶⁰² NRC, The Unmet Needs of Iraqi's Children in Informal Settlements, September 2022, [url](#), pp. 17-19

⁶⁰³ REACH, Missing Civil Documentation in Iraq: Who, Why & How Important is it? February 2023, [url](#), p. 12

⁶⁰⁴ Australia, DFAT, Country Information Report Iraq, 16 January 2023, [url](#), p. 8; Sulaiman H. M., et al., Health System Performance, Mitigation, and Imperative Reform Approaches in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Vol. 17 Issue 1, 2023, [url](#), pp. 91-93

⁶⁰⁵ Sulaiman H. M., et al., Health System Performance, Mitigation, and Imperative Reform Approaches in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Vol. 17 Issue 1, 2023, [url](#), pp. 91-93

⁶⁰⁶ Rudaw, Patients, Students, Civil Servants Lose in Erbil, Baghdad Money Row, 17 September 2023, [url](#); Arab News, AFP, Iraqi Kurds Protest Unpaid Salaries from Baghdad, 5 September 2023, [url](#); New Arab, Iraqi Kurdistan Doctors, Teachers, and Garbage Collectors Go on Strike over Unpaid Salaries, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁷ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, pp. 10, 24, cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#), p. 83 footnote 610; UNICEF, Iraq: Country Office Annual Report 2022, 7 March 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁶⁰⁸ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, p. 24, cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#), p. 83, footnote 611; Shafaq News, Illiteracy Rate in Iraq Drops to 12.3%: Official, 4 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁹ UNFPA, Iraqi Women Integrated Social and Health Survey: Summary of Key Findings, June 2022, [url](#), p. 5



teachers, damaged school facilities are among the main issues affecting the education system in Iraq. Many schools have to operate on a shift system (with two or three shifts) to accommodate students, impacting the quality of education.⁶¹⁰

Despite being one of the world's largest oil producers,⁶¹¹ Iraq struggles with shortages in fuel supply.⁶¹² Due to conflict and lack of maintenance and investment, Iraq's electricity system has been damaged⁶¹³ and power outages across the country occur frequently,⁶¹⁴ especially during the summer.⁶¹⁵ Power cuts have often triggered protests, especially in the poorer southern governorates.⁶¹⁶

Iraq suffers from a housing supply shortage.⁶¹⁷ In 2020, it was estimated that 12.9 % of the population (over 3 million people) lived in informal settlements.⁶¹⁸ The presence of over 252 500 Syrian refugees in the KRI has contributed to further pressure on public services and infrastructure.⁶¹⁹ As of December 2023, the IDP population in Iraq stood at over 1,14 million. Most IDPs are situated in Erbil governorate (19 %), followed by Dohuk governorate (12 %), Ninewa and Sulaymaniyah districts (8 %).⁶²⁰ Sources noted that damaged homes along with lack of livelihoods and basic services continue to represent barriers to the sustainable return of the remaining IDPs.⁶²¹

Dirty and unsafe water is a major health threat at country level,⁶²² with 90% of Iraq's rivers said to be polluted, and 7 million people currently facing reduced access to water.⁶²³ Iraq is projected as the world's fifth most vulnerable country to climate change. In the past two decades, Iraq has faced some of the worst drought conditions in its history.⁶²⁴ In southern Iraq, in particular, communities have increasingly experienced water shortages, affecting access to services and causing displacement. The climate crisis and the ongoing water shortage⁶²⁵ are

⁶¹⁰ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, p. 45, cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#), p. 84, footnote 615

⁶¹¹ World Bank, Iraq Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, 31 July 2023, [url](#), pp. ix-x

⁶¹² GI-TOC, Smuggling, subsidies and shortages: Iraq's latest oil troubles, 10 February 2023, [url](#)

⁶¹³ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2021, 26 April 2022, [url](#), p. 50

⁶¹⁴ AGSIW, Urgent Reforms Needed to Unlock Iraq's Green Potential, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

⁶¹⁵ CSIS, Powering Recovery, March 2023, [url](#), p. 15

⁶¹⁶ Near East Policy Forum, Solar Solutions to Power Outages in Energy-Rich Iraq, 2 March 2023, [url](#)

⁶¹⁷ IRIS, Iraq, Economic Review, Vol. 2 (3), October 2022, [url](#), pp. 10-11; Zawya, Iraq Has 3 Million House Supply Shortage, 20 September 2023, [url](#); Zawya, Iraq Needs 4m In New Houses: Official, 15 August 2023, [url](#); Shafaq, Real Estate in Iraq: Greedy Officials, Corrupt Investors, and Homeless Citizens, 3 February 2023, [url](#)

⁶¹⁸ UN Habitat, Informal Settlements in the Arab Region, February 2020, [url](#), p. 36

⁶¹⁹ UNHCR, Iraq Factsheet: August 2023, 13 September 2023, [url](#), p. 2; UNHCR, Syria Regional Refugee Response: Iraq, updated 31 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶²⁰ UNCHR/DTM, Iraq - Population Profile - Breakdown Overview - IDPs and Returnees, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶²¹ IOM, No Way Home: An Assessment of Barriers to Sustainable Return and Reintegration in Locations of No Return, 19 June 2022, [url](#), p. 5; UNICEF, Humanitarian Action for Children 2024: Iraq, 12 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁶²² France24/AFP, Rampant water pollution threatens Iraq's shrinking rivers, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

⁶²³ UNAMI, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, 18 May 2023, available at [url](#)

⁶²⁴ USAID, Sustainable Solutions to Combat Climate Change in Iraq, 12 March 2023, [url](#); World Bank, Iraq - Country Climate and Development Report, November 2022, [url](#), p. x

⁶²⁵ UNICEF, 2024 Humanitarian Action for Children, 12 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2



considered among the most serious challenges faced by the country,⁶²⁶ impacting the agriculture sector,⁶²⁷ the general livelihood,⁶²⁸ triggering migration to urban areas,⁶²⁹ as well as creating conditions for further inequalities and civil unrest.⁶³⁰

Certain groups within the Iraqi society, including IDPs, returnees, women and girls (especially female-headed households),⁶³¹ children,⁶³² elderly people,⁶³³ persons with disabilities,⁶³⁴ and other marginalised groups remain particularly vulnerable and often socio-economically disadvantaged.⁶³⁵ Individuals who do not hold identity or civil documentation face restrictions in freedom of movement, in accessing basic services and social security benefits, and are at higher risk of being arbitrarily arrested.⁶³⁶ Individuals with perceived affiliation to ISIL also face additional administrative and security barriers to accessing civil documentation.⁶³⁷ See also [\(1.1.3 Individuals with \(perceived\) affiliation to ISIL](#) and [1.4 Children](#)).

2.1.2. Entry, residency requirements and access to civil documentation and services

As noted by UNHCR, the legal framework for entry and residency requirements in Iraq is complex and regulated by legal pluralism. Additionally, regulations are not always implemented, and practices vary depending on locations and implementing authorities. Generally, sponsorship and other security clearance requirements are not regulated by law nor are they officially announced.⁶³⁸

⁶²⁶ SIPRI, Iraq in 2023: Challenges and Prospects for Peace and Human Security, 17 March 2023, [url](#); Varoujan K., et al., The Impact of Water Scarcity on Food Security in Iraq, Journal of Civil Engineering and Architecture 17, 2023, [url](#), pp. 442-443; World Bank, Iraq - Country Climate and Development Report, November 2022, [url](#), p. X-XII; SIDA, Multidimensional Poverty Analysis Iraq 2022, April 2022, [url](#), p. 4

⁶²⁷ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, p. 22, cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#), p. 66, footnote 477

⁶²⁸ IOM, Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2024, last updated 30 January 2024, [url](#); USAID, Sustainable Solutions to Combat Climate Change in Iraq, 12 March 2023, [url](#)

⁶²⁹ Shafaq, Iraq's agricultural landscape: Overcoming challenges amid water scarcity, 31 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶³⁰ World Bank, Iraq - Country Climate and Development Report, November 2022, [url](#), p. X-XII

⁶³¹ UN OCHA, Iraq Humanitarian Transition Overview 2023, 27 February 2023, [url](#), p. 9; DRC, Women, Displacement and Durable Solutions in Iraq, 8 March 2023, [url](#)

⁶³² UNICEF, 2024 Humanitarian Action for Children, 12 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2; UNICEF / International Labour Organization (ILO), On this World Day Against Child Labour, ILO and UNICEF Call for Joint Work among all Stakeholders to Create a Protective and Inclusive Environment for Children in Iraq, 12 June 2022, [url](#)

⁶³³ Dorcas, Falling Through the Cracks: Older People in Conflict Situations, June 2022, [url](#), pp. 15-16

⁶³⁴ UN Iraq, Statement of the United Nations Resident Coordinator on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 3 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶³⁵ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, p. 59, cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#), 70, footnote 494

⁶³⁶ UNHCR, Iraq Factsheet: August 2023, 13 September 2023, [url](#), p. 3; UN OCHA, Iraq Humanitarian Transition Overview 2023, 27 February 2023, [url](#), p. 9; DRC, Life in the Margins, September 2022, [url](#), p. 14

⁶³⁷ Geneva Graduate Institute, Legal Documentation for Persons Living under the Control of Non-State Armed Groups: Humanitarian Needs and Responses, 2 December 2022, [url](#), p. 24; UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 8-9

⁶³⁸ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), p. 2; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024





In order to pass checkpoints and be admitted to the area they intend to enter, individuals are required to hold valid civil documentation (i.e. Civil Status ID card/Unified ID card, nationality certificate, or passport⁶³⁹). Security screenings in the country remain in place at governorate, district, and city entrance checkpoints.⁶⁴⁰ The risk of being arbitrarily detained and arrested at checkpoints increases for people who do not hold such documentation.⁶⁴¹ UNHCR informed that most governorates / districts in Federal Iraq and the KRI do not impose entry requirements.. However, a sponsor is still required to enter Nasiriyah City (Thi-Qar); Haditha, Al-Qaim and Heet (Anbar); Al-Daur, Samarra and Balad (Salah Al-Din), Al-Saadiyah Sub-District, northern Muqdadiah District and villages located in the north of Al-Udhim Sub-District (Diyala) and in ethnically mixed areas of Ninewa, including Tal Afar, Hamdaniyah and Sinjar Districts. The sponsorship requirement in practice means that the individuals need to know someone in the area they intend to enter, who is a resident of that area (i.e., the sponsor needs to have a Housing Card issued in the area) and who is willing to guarantee that the individual does not pose a security risk.⁶⁴²

For individuals to obtain residency in a certain area, valid documents (Civil Status ID card/Unified ID card, nationality certificate) are required.⁶⁴³ Furthermore, a sponsor holding a Housing Card from the area where the individuals are seeking to legally take up temporary residency is required in some governorates and cities. These are: Diyala; Dohuk; Haditha and Heet Districts and Rawa Sub-District (Anbar), and all of the southern governorates. In Baghdad and in Al-Qaim District (Anbar), two sponsors are required.⁶⁴⁴ Further, the individuals – regardless of their profile or origin – need approval from the security actors of the area where they are to relocate, normally from the Ministry of Interior Intelligence Department in Federal Iraq and the *Asayish* in the KRI.⁶⁴⁵

UNHCR stressed the fact that, while Iraqis can temporarily regularise their stay by registering with the local authorities and security actors, only the Housing Card, transferred to or issued in the location where they are to stay, allows the individual or family to permanently settle and

⁶³⁹ As reported by UNHCR: Key documentation includes: Civil Status ID card (CSID); Nationality Certificate; Unified ID card (UNID, substituting both the CSID and the nationality certificate); birth certificate; and Public Distribution System (PDS) card for food assistance. A combination of these documents is required to access basic services and exercise fundamental human rights. Often one document is a prerequisite for issuing or renewing the other documents. Normally, civil documentation has to be issued in the place of origin, i.e. in the area in which an individual's CSID or UNID has been issued. The requirement of in-person presence in the area of origin is partly addressed through ad hoc mobile missions undertaken by the Ministry of Interior and Civil Affairs Directorates to reach IDPs in camps and some informal sites/urban areas. UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024; For information on the various types of Iraqi official documents and procedures on how to access them see also Simaet Bhatha, Iraqi Official Identification Documents: What are they and how do I get them?, last updated 15 March 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁰ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), p. 4

⁶⁴¹ DRC, Life in the Margins, September 2022, [url](#), p. 14; UNOCHA, 2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Iraq, March 2022, [url](#), p. 28

⁶⁴² UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁶⁴³ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), p. 6; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁶⁴⁴ UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁶⁴⁵ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), p. 12; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024





access the full range of rights and basic services,⁶⁴⁶ such as health, education, food rations through the PDS, obtaining/renewing civil documentation, exercising the right to vote, accessing employment, entering formal rent agreements and buying property.⁶⁴⁷

The Housing Card (or Residence Card, in Arabic: *bitaqa al-sakan*) is an official document used in both Federal Iraq and in the KRI that certifies an individual's place of domicile or residency. The Housing Card shows the address where the head of household rents or owns a residence.⁶⁴⁸ Individuals or head of households who intend to transfer their Housing Card to a new location or to obtain the issuance of a new Housing Card need to meet a set of administrative and documentary requirements, in accordance with Ministry of Interior Instructions on the Housing Card (2018). In practice, the implementation of these instructions can vary.⁶⁴⁹ As reported by UNHCR, such requirements are the following:

'a) Requirements for the transfer of the Housing Card to the new location

- Approval from the Housing Information Office in the former place of residency to transfer the individual's records to the new place of residency and deactivate the Housing Card in the former place of residency. This approval is not granted if there is an ongoing investigation or an arrest warrant against the individual or any family member;
- An application form signed and stamped by the *mukhtar* (or local council or mayor) in the new place of residency; and
- The approval from the concerned security actor/s in the new location, normally the Ministry of Interior Intelligence Department (Federal Iraq) or the *Asayish* (KR-I), respectively.

b) Requirements for the first-time issuance of the Housing Card in the new location

- Proof of residency or support letter from the *mukhtar* (or the local council or mayor) in charge of the neighbourhood in which the head of household seeks to reside. In Diyala and the Southern governorates, this proof of residency or support letter needs to be signed by one sponsor and in Baghdad by two sponsors, and certified by the mayor's office. In Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah Governorate, endorsement of the mayor's office is also required. In Kirkuk, there is no need for a sponsor, but instead a letter confirming that the head of household is no longer resident in the former place of residency needs to be obtained from the mukhtar or local council and endorsed by the local police in the former place of residency; and

⁶⁴⁶ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 6-7; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁶⁴⁷ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), p. 7; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁶⁴⁸ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), p. 1, footnote 3; DRC, Life in the Margins, September 2022, [url](#), p. 12; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁶⁴⁹ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), p. 7; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024





- Approval from the concerned security actor(s) in the new location, normally the Ministry of Interior Intelligence Department (Federal Iraq) or the *Asayish* (KR-I), respectively.

c) Documents required for the transfer/issuance of the Housing Card

- Original CSID and nationality certificate or UNID for all family members;
- Approval letter from the local police department;
- Original Housing Card or, in case of first-time issuance, copy of the Housing Card in which the individual's name was included (e.g., father's Housing Card);
- Marriage contract in case of first-time issuance;
- A rental contract or house ownership deed from the new location; and
- At times, other documents such as the PDS card are also required.⁶⁵⁰

Once all requirements are met, the Housing Card will be transferred or issued within 10 to 14 days. However, the process might take longer for some individuals who can be subjected to additional scrutiny checks. These include single men, especially Sunni Arabs and Sunni Turkmen from formerly ISIL-held or conflict-affected areas.⁶⁵¹

There are several obstacles that can prevent individuals from obtaining the Housing Card in the location where they intend/are to reside. These include:

- lack of documentation and inability to renew or replace it (reissuing lost or expired identity documents or transferring the Housing Card itself generally requires that the individual returns to their place of origin; some individual may not be able to return to their area of origin, including for fear of being targeted or for lack of documentation needed to pass checkpoints);
- difficulties in obtaining security clearance (for instance for individuals who are on a wanted list on ground of affiliation to ISIL, as well as for individuals who are perceived to have ISIL affiliation based on similar surnames with people on wanted list);⁶⁵²
- family composition: single men and women normally are included in their father's Housing Card and cannot obtain the Housing Card in their name in the new location;
- political reasons related to the status of the disputed territories and to demographics. For instance, in Kirkuk City, the transfer of the Housing Card is generally not permitted because of the city's disputed status. Also, in the KRI, people with certain profiles or originating from certain areas are not allowed to transfer their Housing Card or to obtain a new Housing Card (these include, in Erbil and Dohuk: Arabs, Turkmen and members of ethnic/religious minority groups from areas outside the KRI; in

⁶⁵⁰ UNHCR, *Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation*, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 7-8; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁶⁵¹ UNHCR, *Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation*, November 2022, [url](#), p. 8; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁶⁵² UNHCR, *Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation*, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 8-9; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024





Sulaymaniyah: single Arab and Turkmen men and women,⁶⁵³ also Kurds and Yazidis originating from the disputed territories).⁶⁵⁴

2.2. Baghdad

2.2.1. Entry, residency requirements and access to civil documentation and services

Baghdad does not impose sponsorship requirements for entering the governorate.⁶⁵⁵

Residency requirements are in place for individuals who do not originate from Baghdad governorate, regardless of their ethno-religious profile. Such requirements are the following:

- Two sponsors from the neighbourhood where the individuals intend to reside.
- A support letter from the *mukhtar* (or the local council or mayor).
- The individuals need to be accompanied to the *mukhtar* by the two sponsors. The support letter by the *mukhtar* does not need to be renewed nor does it need to specify period of validity. Costs for the issuance of such letter vary between 2 000 and 5 000 circa Iraqi Dinars, depending on the *mukhtar*.
- Security clearance from the security actors.⁶⁵⁶

Individuals who meet all these requirements are generally able to regularise their residency in Baghdad, to rent an apartment, to access employment, public and private hospitals (however, they cannot access public healthcare centres in their neighbourhood) as well as tertiary education.⁶⁵⁷

For individuals to be able to access the full range of rights and basic services, they are required to either transfer from the previous location or obtain a new Housing Card to the new location where they are to reside in Baghdad, (on requirements and procedure to obtain the Housing Card (see [2.1.2 Entry, residency requirements and access to civil documentation and services](#)). The Housing Card gives individuals full access to services, including primary healthcare provided by public healthcare centres in their neighbourhood and access to primary and secondary education. Furthermore, they can transfer their civil status records to Baghdad and subsequently obtain/renew the Civil Status ID Card/Unified ID Card in the new place of residency.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵³ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 8-9; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁶⁵⁴ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), p. 13; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁶⁵⁵ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), p. 44; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁶⁵⁶ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 4, 84; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁶⁵⁷ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), p. 104; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁶⁵⁸ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), p. 104; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024



2.2.2. Economy

Baghdad, the capital of the country and capital of Baghdad governorate,⁶⁵⁹ is a densely populated city, with a population projected at approximately 9 million in 2022.⁶⁶⁰ The majority of the population is composed of Sunni and Shia Arabs; other ethno-religious groups include Christians, Sunni and Shia Kurds, Sunni and Shia Turkmen. The city's displaced population is composed mainly of Sunni Arabs.⁶⁶¹ Baghdad is one of the wealthiest and most economically diverse areas of the country, with oil refining representing its main economic activity.⁶⁶² Baghdad is also the centre of commerce, banking and finance,⁶⁶³ as well as a manufacturing hub, with economic activities including production of textiles, cement, leather, carpets and tobacco products.⁶⁶⁴ Various military industries are also located in Baghdad.⁶⁶⁵ With its international airport, the capital serves as an important trading centre in the region. Furthermore, the city attracts more than one million tourists each year.⁶⁶⁶ After the sharp recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Iraq's economy rapidly recovered in 2022 thanks to increase in oil-selling, resulting in accelerated GDP growth.⁶⁶⁷ Baghdad city's development is described as reviving.⁶⁶⁸ Government investments have been directed at improving water and electricity services in some neighbourhoods, constructing bridges and redesigning street.⁶⁶⁹ A boom in real estate⁶⁷⁰ is unfolding in the city, which, however, is reported to be fuelled by corruption and money laundering.⁶⁷¹

2.2.3. Employment

In Baghdad governorate, the unemployment rate was at 13.5 %, ⁶⁷² while youth unemployment rate stood at 15 %. ⁶⁷³ Youth not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Baghdad was at 17.5 % for men and 48.1 % for women. ⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁵⁹ Bahry L. & Marr P., A.. Baghdad, Encyclopedia Britannica, 10 February 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁰ Iraq, CSO, المجموعه الاحصائية 2022-2023 الباب الثاني [Statistical Collection 2022-2023, Part Two], 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 8

⁶⁶¹ IOM, Cities as Home: Location Factsheets and Case Studies of Local Integration, 6 January 2021, [url](#), p. 39

⁶⁶² Jiyad, S. et al., Economic Drivers of Youth Political Discontent in Iraq: The Voice of Young People in Kurdistan, Baghdad, Basra and Thi-Qar, February 2021, [url](#), p.26

⁶⁶³ NCCI, Baghdad Governorate Profile, updated December 2015, [url](#), p. 2

⁶⁶⁴ Jiyad, S., et al., Economic Drivers of Youth Political Discontent in Iraq: The Voice of Young People in Kurdistan, Baghdad, Basra and Thi-Qar, February 2021, [url](#), p. 26; Rawabet Center for Research and Strategic Studies, Economy of the largest cities of Iraq "Baghdad", 4 October 2018, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁵ Jiyad, S., et al., Economic Drivers of Youth Political Discontent in Iraq: The Voice of Young People in Kurdistan, Baghdad, Basra and Thi-Qar, February 2021, [url](#), p.26

⁶⁶⁶ Rawabet Center for Research and Strategic Studies, Economy of the largest cities of Iraq "Baghdad", 4 October 2018, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁷ World Bank, Iraq Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, 31 July 2023, [url](#), pp. ix-x, 1; IMF, Iraq: 2022 Article IV Consultation-Press Release; and Staff Report, 3 February 2023, [url](#), p. 5

⁶⁶⁸ Economist, After 20 years of trauma, Iraq is struggling to recover, 23 March 2023, [url](#); Al Monitor, 'Fertile ground': Baghdad sees timid revival with investment drive, 26 September 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁹ Asharq Al-Awsat, 'Fertile Ground': Baghdad Sees Timid Revival with Investment Drive, 27 September 2023, [url](#); Reuters, Baghdad gets make-over as repairs kindle guarded optimism, 16 May 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁰ Reuters, Baghdad's historic homes crumble as real estate booms, 7 October 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁷¹ Washington Post, A building boom fueled by corruption is changing the face of Baghdad, 29 June 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁷² ILO/CSO/KRSO, Iraqi Labour Force Survey 2021, 5 July 2022, [url](#), pp. 6, 15

⁶⁷³ Iraq, MoP, The Second National Voluntary Review Report on the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, July 2021, [url](#), p. 96

⁶⁷⁴ ILO/CSO/KRSO, Iraqi Labour Force Survey 2021, 5 July 2022, [url](#), p. 55



The public sector remains the dominant employer across the country.⁶⁷⁵ Efforts have recently been made by the Iraqi government to reform the private sector,⁶⁷⁶ which still remains underdeveloped,⁶⁷⁷ lacking social protection⁶⁷⁸ and largely informal.⁶⁷⁹ Nepotism⁶⁸⁰ and favouritism along family, tribal and political lines dominates recruitment in both the public and the private sector.⁶⁸¹ Employment opportunities for young people are limited,⁶⁸² including for university graduates in Baghdad who struggle to find jobs.⁶⁸³ Unemployment and delay in payment of public sector salaries were among the main reasons for a series of protests that erupted in various cities, including in Baghdad, between 2019 and 2021.⁶⁸⁴

2.2.4. Poverty

Data on poverty indicators in Iraq are largely outdated.⁶⁸⁵ The latest survey data publicly available for Iraq's Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) refer to 2018. Based on these estimates, 8.6 % of the population in Iraq is described as multidimensionally poor while an additional 5.2 % is classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty. The intensity of deprivations in Iraq, which is the average deprivation score among people living in multidimensional poverty, is 37.9 %.⁶⁸⁶ According to poverty rates estimates conducted by the Central Statistics Organisation (CSO) and cited by the UN, in 2021, 29.6 % of the Iraqi population was under the poverty line, with rates higher in the southern governorates.⁶⁸⁷ Based on data by the Ministry of Planning and cited by media outlets, poverty headcounts rates in 2021 varied significantly among governorates, with Baghdad and Kurdistan region ranging between 12.5 % and 13 %, while some southern governorates reaching 50 %.⁶⁸⁸

Baghdad is the governorate where the highest number of slums and informal settlements are concentrated.⁶⁸⁹ Sadr City, a suburb of Baghdad, has been the city's poorest neighbourhood

⁶⁷⁵ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, p. 54, cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#), p. 70, footnote 497; World Bank, Iraq Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, 31 July 2023, [url](#), p. x

⁶⁷⁶ ILO, Iraq Invests in Building a Social Security System that Protects Workers, 17 May 2023, [url](#); Equal Times, A new era of opportunity is opening up in Iraq with the development of the private sector and the creation of start-ups, 15 October 2023, [url](#); Amwaj.media, Despite Criticism, Iraq's PM Pursues Expansion of Public Sector, 17 January 2023, [url](#); World Bank, Iraq Economic Monitor, Fall 2022, 17 November 2022, [url](#), p. 14

⁶⁷⁷ Prospect, Iraq: The Fallout, 1 March 2023, [url](#); AP, Corruption, Deep Disparity Mark Iraq's Oil Legacy post-2003, 24 March 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁸ World Bank, Iraq Country Climate and Development Report, 9 November 2022, [url](#), p. 45

⁶⁷⁹ World Bank, Iraq Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, 31 July 2023, [url](#), pp. x, 3.

⁶⁸⁰ UNPD, Community-Based Reconciliation & Reintegration in Iraq, 28 June 2022, [url](#), pp. 31-32; AP, Corruption, Deep Disparity Mark Iraq's Oil Legacy post-2003, 24 March 2023, [url](#); Prospect, Iraq: The Fallout, 1 March 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸¹ RFI/AFP, Iraq's Young Covet Govt Jobs in Headache for Economy, 2 October 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁸² Musings on Iraq, Iraq's Youth Hit Hardest by Unemployment and Poverty, 22 January 2024, [url](#); ILO, Cost of Inaction: Education Deprivation in Iraq and the Potential of Social Protection to Reverse it, 7 March 2023, [url](#) p. 7; World Bank, Iraq Economic Monitor, Fall 2022, 17 November 2022, [url](#), pp. 3, 14

⁶⁸³ Xinhua, Feature: Young Iraqis struggle to find jobs amid continued chaos, conflicts, 29 June 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁴ AI, Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights, 7 April 2021, [url](#), p. 196; Chatham House, Networks of power: The Popular Mobilization Forces and the State in Iraq, February 2021, [url](#), p.14; MEMO, Thousands of Iraqis protest government employment policy, 1 February 2021, [url](#); Jiyad, S. et al., Economic Drivers of Youth Political Discontent in Iraq: The Voice of Young People in Kurdistan, Baghdad, Basra and Thi-Qar, February 2021, [url](#), p. 56; AP, Bloated public salaries at heart of Iraq's economic woes, 23 October 2020, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁵ SIDA, Multidimensional Poverty Analysis Iraq 2022, April 2022, [url](#), p. 3

⁶⁸⁶ UNPD, Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023 Iraq, [url](#), p. 2

⁶⁸⁷ UN, Iraq Common Country Analysis, 2022, 27 July 2022, [url](#), pp. 28-29

⁶⁸⁸ Shafaq, Abject poverty inflicts less than 2% of the total poverty headcounts, official says, 27 April 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁹ INA, MOP: Baghdad as the first place in slums, 22 December 2021, [url](#)



for decades.⁶⁹⁰ Since the US-led 2003 invasion, its population is reported to have tripled, with the arrival of displaced people from other governorates.⁶⁹¹ Economic opportunities in this neighbourhood are reported as non-existent, with unemployment and poverty rampant throughout the area.⁶⁹²

Along with Sadr City, other districts described as ‘poorer’ as well as a ‘concentration of economically disadvantaged Shia population in eastern and southern Baghdad’ are Al-Shu’ala, Al-Hurriya and Al-Za’faraniya.⁶⁹³

Since PMF members often act as middlemen with government or private entities, particularly people in poorer areas in eastern and southern Baghdad and the youth resort to relying on or joining PMF groups – the dominant factions there being the Peace Brigades and the Asaib Ahl Al-Haq (AAH). Poverty and structural inequality create dependence of Baghdad’s poorer neighbourhoods’ residents upon Peace Brigaded and AAH for access to public and/or private services, jobs, bureaucratic approval,⁶⁹⁴ as well as aid support.⁶⁹⁵ See [1.4.4 Child exploitation and child marriage](#).

2.2.5. Food security

As of 1 August 2023, Baghdad was characterised as 4th top governorate with the highest prevalence of insufficient food consumption, affecting a total of 326 000 people.⁶⁹⁶ Based on latest available public data, the price of the food basket⁶⁹⁷ in Baghdad increased by 36 % in late December 2020.⁶⁹⁸ It was also Baghdad where the highest variation in price was observed between January and April 2021.⁶⁹⁹ Increase in prices across the whole country had an impact in the food security at household level,⁷⁰⁰ leading to increased food insecurity.⁷⁰¹ Rise in food prices was among the main reasons for a wave of protests in cities across Iraq in 2022, including in Baghdad.⁷⁰²

⁶⁹⁰ Vice, The Iraqi war is 20 years old. So are these young Iraqis, 20 March 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁹¹ Guardian, Guns, cash, and frozen chicken: the militia boss doling out aid in Baghdad, 20 March 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁹² Washington Institute, Addressing Iraq’s Environmental Challenges: Population Growth, 17 October 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁹³ Skelton, M. and Saleem, Z. A., Living Among the Hashd: Relations Between Citizens and Security Actors in Five Iraqi Provinces, IRIS, July 2021, [url](#), pp. 11, 14

⁶⁹⁴ Skelton, M. and Saleem, Z. A., Living Among the Hashd: Relations Between Citizens and Security Actors in Five Iraqi Provinces, IRIS, July 2021, [url](#), pp. 5, 8, 11, 32-33; Chatham House, Networks of power – The Popular Mobilization Forces and the state in Iraq, February 2021, [url](#), p. 15

⁶⁹⁵ Guardian, Guns, cash, and frozen chicken: the militia boss doling out aid in Baghdad, 20 March 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁶ WFP, Hunger Map Live: Iraq insight and key trends, 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁶⁹⁷ For more information on the composition of the Food Basket see WFP, Iraqi Dinar Devaluation and the Price of the Food Basket, 3 March 2021, [url](#), p. 3

⁶⁹⁸ FAO et al., Iraq Covid-19 Food Security Monitor - Bi-weekly Update, Issue 25, 5 January 2021, [url](#), p. 2

⁶⁹⁹ FAO et al., Food Security in Iraq: Impact of COVID-19, with a Special Section on Water Shortages and Adaptation, 3 October 2021, [url](#), p. 28

⁷⁰⁰ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, p. 23, cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#), p. 75, footnote 535

⁷⁰¹ WFP, Iraq Annual Country Report 2022, 11 April 2023, [url](#), pp. 3, 7; World Bank, Iraq Economic Monitor, Fall 2022, 17 November 2022, [url](#), pp. 9, 13; IOM, Migration, Environment, and Climate Change in Iraq, 11 August 2022, [url](#), p. 10

⁷⁰² Amwaj.media, Tension simmers on Iraqi street as food prices rise, 3 June 2022, [url](#)



2.2.6. Healthcare

As of 2021, Baghdad has the highest concentration of hospitals and secondary care centres of the country.⁷⁰³ Data by the Health Ministry in 2020 showed that Baghdad disposed of the nationwide highest bed availability in public hospitals (1.6 beds per 1 000 people) with a total number of 13 628 beds, of which 10 729 were general hospital beds and the remainder being labelled as ‘emergency beds’. Baghdad’s private hospitals offered an additional 2 342 general hospital beds.⁷⁰⁴ In 2023, the government announced to have accelerated the construction plans of additional three hospitals in the capital Baghdad, in particular in the densely populated districts of Al-Fadhiliya, Al-Hurriya, and Al-Shaab.⁷⁰⁵ The construction works were not completed at the time of drafting.⁷⁰⁶ (For information on the situation of healthcare at national level see [Socio-economic situation](#))

2.2.7. Education

Six years of schooling between ages six and twelve are compulsory for children in Baghdad, as in the rest of Federal Iraq.⁷⁰⁷ School completion rates in Baghdad governorate were 73 % for primary school, 44 % for lower secondary school and 32 % for upper secondary school. Out of school rates stood at 8 % for primary education level, 20 % for lower secondary and 46 % for upper secondary level.⁷⁰⁸ With 48 % of the country’s universities or colleges and 53 % of scientific departments, Baghdad hosts the highest share of tertiary educational institutions among all governorates.⁷⁰⁹ During April 2020, 64 % of children aged 5-17 in four IDP camps in Baghdad governorate surveyed by Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aid reportedly did not receive any kind of schooling. Their illiteracy rate was reported as 12 %.⁷¹⁰ For more information on access to education for children at country level see [1.4 Children](#).

2.2.8. Housing and living conditions

The housing shortage in the country⁷¹¹ disproportionately affects middle and low-income Iraqis.⁷¹² The high demand is also pushing the prices up making rents and real estate prices

⁷⁰³ Istepanian, R. S. H., Mapping Iraq’s Post-2003 Health Crisis: Two Decades of Retrogression and Kleptocracy, Centre Français de recherche sur l’Irak (CFRI), 31 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁴ Iraq, Ministry of Health and Environment, Annual Statistical Report 2020, 2021, [url](#), pp. 141, 143

⁷⁰⁵ BNN, Accelerating Hospital Construction in Baghdad: A Step Towards Enhanced Healthcare Infrastructure, 25 September 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁶ Iraq, Ministry of Planning, The Ministry of Planning announced the progress of the completion stages of Al-Hurriya Hospital in Baghdad, at a rate of 54%, and its opening at the end of next year, 22 March 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁷ IRFAD, Iraq Education, n.d., accessed 14 March 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁸ UNICEF, Iraq Education Fact Sheet 2020 – Analyses for learning and equity using MICS data, 2020, [url](#), pp. 9, 15; UNICEF, How to improve financing of the education sector in Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#) p. 1

⁷⁰⁹ Iraq, MoP, National Development Plan 2018-2022, June 2018, [url](#), p. 197

⁷¹⁰ Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aid, Health and Educational Status of Iraqi Children in IDP Camps During COVID-19: An Assessment of Children in IDP Camps in Salah Al Din, Anbar, Ninewa, and Baghdad Governorates of Iraq, May 2020, [url](#), pp. 3-4, 9

⁷¹¹ Zawya, Iraq Has 3 Million House Supply Shortage, 20 September 2023, [url](#); Institute of Regional and International Studies (IRIS), Iraq, Economic Review, Vol. 2 (3), October 2022, [url](#), pp. 10-12

⁷¹² UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2021, 26 April 2022, [url](#), p. 46; Institute of Regional and International Studies (IRIS), Iraq, Economic Review, Vol. 2 (3), October 2022, [url](#), p. 10



unaffordable for most Iraqis across the country, including in the capital Baghdad.⁷¹³ For instance, the price of a square meter in commercial centres in Baghdad is reported to be up to 20 000 USD versus 600 USD in the outskirts of the city.⁷¹⁴ Baghdad city is witnessing a boom in real estate,⁷¹⁵ which is reported to be fuelled by corruption and money laundering.⁷¹⁶ Many of the new estate developments are, however, economically inaccessible to ordinary Iraqis.⁷¹⁷ To address the housing crisis, the Iraqi government has initiated plans for new low-cost and high-end housing projects across the country,⁷¹⁸ including in the capital Baghdad where it is planning to build 70 000 units in Sadr City and 100 000 units in Bismaya City.⁷¹⁹

In 2020, UN Habitat estimated that 12.9 % of the Iraqi population (over 3 million people) lived in informal settlements.⁷²⁰ Baghdad has the highest concentration of slums, with over 1 000 informal settlements,⁷²¹ which represents around 26 % of the total housing.⁷²² The most densely populated neighbourhood of Baghdad is Sadr City, with almost 3 million people living in an area of less than 30 km². Often, multiple families are forced to share one house, in conditions of chronic water scarcity and deteriorating sanitation networks.⁷²³ Slums are present across all 16 municipalities of Baghdad. Many poor, even middle-class families are reported to resort to living in informal settlements rather than renting apartments.⁷²⁴ Informal settlements are mostly substandard makeshift structures,⁷²⁵ overcrowded and mostly lacking services and infrastructure. Children living in these areas are either out of school or have to walk long distances to reach schools in the neighbouring residential areas.⁷²⁶ In Baghdad, where most job opportunities are concentrated in the city centre, residents of informal settlements have limited access to employment, due to a lack of public transportation, high transportation costs and checkpoints at the city entrances. As a result, most people residing in slums in Baghdad resort to non-fixed income from working in construction and portering, concrete block and brick factories. Most homes in these settlements in Baghdad were built illegally,⁷²⁷ putting residents at risk of eviction.⁷²⁸ Law enforcement and justice for residents in the slums are provided by tribes, rather than formal law enforcement.⁷²⁹

⁷¹³ France 24/AFP, In Iraq, Graft Helps Push Property Prices Out of Reach, 4 January 2023, [url](#); Shafaq, 'Drastic rise' in Baghdad's real estate prices, 20 October 2022, [url](#)

⁷¹⁴ Al-Monitor, How Can Iraq Help 3.5 Million Citizens Living in Urban Slums?, 21 October 2022, [url](#)

⁷¹⁵ Reuters, Baghdad's historic homes crumble as real estate booms, 7 October 2022, [url](#)

⁷¹⁶ Washington Post, A building boom fueled by corruption is changing the face of Baghdad, 29 June 2023, [url](#)

⁷¹⁷ Al-Shakeri H., The Underbelly Of Iraq's 'Economic Boom', IRIS, 7 October 2023, [url](#)

⁷¹⁸ Iraqi News, The Prime Minister Announces the Establishment of a New Residential City in Dhi Qar, 5 January 2024, [url](#); Zawya, Iraq to Invite Developers to 5 New City Projects, 2 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹⁹ Zawya, Iraq's 2nd Largest Housing Project to Be Finished in 3 Years, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷²⁰ UN Habitat, Informal Settlements in the Arab Region, February 2020, [url](#), p. 36

⁷²¹ Assafir Al-Arabi, Informal Settlements in Iraq: The Forgotten Cities of the Forgotten, 4 June 2022, [url](#); UN Habitat, Informal Settlements in the Arab Region, February 2020, [url](#), pp. 34-36

⁷²² UN Habitat, Informal Settlements in the Arab Region, February 2020, [url](#), p. 26

⁷²³ Washington Institute, Addressing Iraq's Environmental Challenges: Population Growth, 17 October 2023, [url](#)

⁷²⁴ Assafir Al-Arabi, Informal Settlements in Baghdad, 6 June 2022, [url](#)

⁷²⁵ UN Habitat, Informal Settlements in the Arab Region, February 2020, [url](#), p. 20

⁷²⁶ Al-Monitor, How Can Iraq Help 3.5 Million Citizens Living in Urban Slums?, 21 October 2022, [url](#); Assafir Al-Arabi, Informal Settlements in Baghdad, 6 June 2022, [url](#)

⁷²⁷ Assafir Al-Arabi, Informal Settlements in Baghdad, 6 June 2022, [url](#)

⁷²⁸ IOM, DTM Emergency Tracking: Eviction from Informal Settlements (1-14 November 2023), 6 December 2023, [url](#); USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p.

⁷²⁹ Assafir Al-Arabi, Informal Settlements in Iraq: The Forgotten Cities of the Forgotten, 4 June 2022, [url](#)



IOM reported that 26 634 IDPs were living in Baghdad as of August 2023, 8 562 of whom lived in severe living conditions. From January to April 2023, reduction in the electricity supply and job opportunities in Tarmia district and Abu Ghraib district of Baghdad City led to an increase in the number of IDPs living in severe conditions.⁷³⁰

In July 2021, the Federal Government launched an initiative granting land bonds to specific groups of persons such as government employees and widows. Such initiative has however been criticised for not being properly implemented.⁷³¹

Iraq's electricity system is still degraded⁷³² and power outages across the country occur frequently.⁷³³ Privately-owned generators that provide electricity across the country are used by powerful actors as a source of income.⁷³⁴ Infrastructure works are currently undergoing in Baghdad city, and electricity supply is reported to have improved.⁷³⁵ People living in makeshift shelters in IDP camps and in informal settlements are particularly impacted by the recurrent power cuts.⁷³⁶ Throughout 2022, long queues at petrol stations were reported, as well as the closure of numerous others due to a lack of fuel in several cities, including Baghdad.⁷³⁷

2.2.9. Water and sanitation

Dirty and unsafe water is a major health threat at country level.⁷³⁸ Accessing clean drinking water is one of the most pressing challenges in Iraq,⁷³⁹ including in Baghdad.⁷⁴⁰ Water quality is reported as extremely low as a result of pollution and untreated waste discharge, especially from informal settlements, industrial activities and agriculture. In Baghdad, salinity levels of rivers exceed the threshold for drinking water quality, compromising water supply security for domestic and agricultural uses.⁷⁴¹ For instance, the Municipality of Baghdad treats only 53 % of the approximately 1.4 million cubic meters of household wastewater which is disposed of daily. Due to a lack of sufficient wastewater disposal systems in slums, treatment rates are even lower, and residents are forced to improvise their own sewage systems that usually end up in canals and rivers.⁷⁴² Water contamination is the cause of an increase in disease cases, including in Baghdad.⁷⁴³

⁷³⁰ IOM, Iraq Displacement Index - Findings Round Seven (May- August 2023), October 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁷³¹ Al-Monitor, Mega Projects Do Little to Calm Iraq's Housing Crisis, 19 July 2022, [url](#)

⁷³² UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2021, 26 April 2022, [url](#), p. 50

⁷³³ AGSIW, Urgent Reforms Needed to Unlock Iraq's Green Potential, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

⁷³⁴ Near East Policy Forum, Solar Solutions to Power Outages in Energy-Rich Iraq, 2 March 2023, [url](#)

⁷³⁵ Reuters, Baghdad gets make-over as repairs kindle guarded optimism, 16 May 2023, [url](#)

⁷³⁶ Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, Iraq: IDPs in Camps Face Dire Conditions as Temperature Rises, 21 July 2022, [url](#); USAID, Iraq: Complex Emergency, 30 September 2022, [url](#), p. 3

⁷³⁷ New Arab, Iraqis fear fuel crisis as shortages hit Baghdad, Mosul, 16 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷³⁸ France24/AFP, Rampant water pollution threatens Iraq's shrinking rivers, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷³⁹ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, p. 17, cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#) p. 87, footnote 639; REACH, Key Multi-Sectoral Findings, 14 December 2023, [url](#), pp. 13, 41-42, 52

⁷⁴⁰ Kurdistan 24, Baghdad Subdistrict Has Lacked Water for more than 15 Years, 29 October 2023, [url](#);

France24/AFP, Rampant water pollution threatens Iraq's shrinking rivers, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁴¹ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, p. 58, cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#) p. 87, footnote 640; Shafaq, 'State Toxins' Infiltrate Iraqi Homes: Drought, Pollution, and Government Initiatives, 1 October 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁴² Water, Peace and Security, Action Needed: Three Priorities for Iraq's Water Sector, June 2022, [url](#), p. 7

⁷⁴³ Shafaq, 'State Toxins' Infiltrate Iraqi Homes: Drought, Pollution, and Government Initiatives, 1 October 2023, [url](#)



2.3. Sulaymaniyah

2.3.1. Entry, residency requirements and access to civil documentation and services

According to UNHCR, for Iraqis who originate from any other KRI governorates and for Iraqi Kurds from outside the KRI, there is generally no entry requirements or restrictions to enter Sulaymaniyah governorate, other than presenting their Civil Status ID Card/Unified ID Card. Yazidis from outside the KRI are in practice treated similarly to Kurds and can enter Sulaymaniyah governorate by presenting their Civil Status ID Card/Unified ID Card.⁷⁴⁴

UNHCR information indicates that Iraqi Arabs and Turkmen who originate from outside the KRI go through security screening at the internal border (not the airport), following which, they are granted by the *Asayish* a temporary entry permit (Tourist Visitor Card) valid for 30 days. Such short-term entry permit allows individuals to stay in Sulaymaniyah governorate for the validity period and is granted for purposes such as medical care, business, shopping, or other reasons. Individuals who hold the Tourist Visitor Card cannot access employment or rent an apartment, other than a hotel room. Individuals who hold a Tourist Visitor Card and intend to stay beyond the 30 day-period must regularise their stay with the *Asayish* and the *mukhtar* in the neighbourhood where they seek to reside. Individuals who arrive in the governorate via Sulaymaniyah airport are not granted a Tourist Visitor Card and if they intend to stay in the governorate, they must approach the *Asayish* and the *mukhtar* in the neighbourhood where they seek to reside.⁷⁴⁵

Regardless of their place of origin and ethno-religious profile, all Iraqis have access to public education and health services in Sulaymaniyah. For people to access other rights and basic services, including employment and housing, they must regularise their stay with the *Asayish* and transfer their Housing Card.⁷⁴⁶

UNHCR notes that residency requirements vary depending on the place of origin, ethno-religious profile and family status of the individual.⁷⁴⁷ In fact, in the KRI, individuals with certain profiles or originating from certain areas are not allowed to transfer their Housing Card or obtain a new Housing Card. This is also the case for Sulaymaniyah governorate, where single Arab and Turkmen men and women, as well as Kurds and Yazidis originating from the disputed territories⁷⁴⁸ cannot request the transfer of their Public Distribution System (PDS) card, but they must instead return to the place of origin to obtain the monthly food rations.

⁷⁴⁴ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 5-6; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁷⁴⁵ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 5-6; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁷⁴⁶ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), p. 15; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁷⁴⁷ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), p. 15; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁷⁴⁸ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 8-9, 13; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024



Newborns can be added to the PDS cards only by returning to the place of origin. The renewal of the PDS card can be done in Sulaymaniyah.⁷⁴⁹

Transfer or Issuance of the Housing Card for Iraqis from another KRI governorate

Irrespective of their ethnic/religious background, Iraqis originating from another governorate in the KRI, need to request a new *Asayish* code⁷⁵⁰ and either transfer their Housing Card from the governorate of origin to Sulaymaniyah Governorate, or obtain a new Housing Card in Sulaymaniyah Governorate. These procedures involve various steps, including an interview by the General *Asayish* Directorate of Sulaymaniyah. Once the individuals have obtained a new *Asayish* code, they can start the process of renting a house. However, only once they have transferred the Housing Card in Sulaymaniyah Governorate, they can sign a rental agreement, access employment and also transfer their PDS card. To obtain or renew their CSID/UNID in Sulaymaniyah, individuals need to return to their place of origin. Single men and women are reported to face restrictions on areas and types of rental accommodation.⁷⁵¹

Transfer or Issuance of the Housing Card for Kurds and Yazidis from outside the KRI

For Iraqis with Kurdish or Yazidi background who originate from a governorate outside the KRI, the same process as for Iraqis from another KRI governorate, as described above, applies. Once their Housing Card has been transferred to or issued in Sulaymaniyah, they have access to regular employment and can request the transfer of the PDS card to Sulaymaniyah (unless they originate from the disputed areas). To obtain or renew their CSID/UNID in Sulaymaniyah, individuals need to return to their place of origin. Single men and women are reported to face restrictions on types and location of rental accommodation.⁷⁵²

Issuance of residency permit for Arab and Turkmen families from outside the KRI

To obtain a residency card, Arab and Turkmen families originating from outside the KRI do not require a sponsor, however they must contact the local *Asayish* in the neighbourhood in which they seek to reside. The residency card is valid for one year and can be renewed. Once obtained the one-year residency card, Arab and Turkmen families can rent an apartment and access informal employment (usually in the construction and hospitality sectors).⁷⁵³

⁷⁴⁹ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), p. 15 footnote 50; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁷⁵⁰ UNHCR noted that ‘The *Asayish* code is provided to every individual above 18 years old. Due to prevailing political, security and administrative divisions, the *Asayish* codes vary in each KR-I governorate. Therefore, individuals from Erbil, Dohuk or Halabja seeking to settle in Sulaymaniyah Governorate will require a new *Asayish* code.’ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), p.15 footnote 49

⁷⁵¹ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 15-16; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁷⁵² UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 15-16; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁷⁵³ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 15-16; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024



Transfer or issuance of the Housing Card for Arab and Turkmen families outside the KRI

Arab and Turkmen families who hold a one-year residency card can request the transfer of their Housing Card to Sulaymaniyah, or obtain a new Housing Card (same process as described above for Iraqis from another KRI governorate applies). Once they obtain the transfer of their Housing Card, these individuals can access regular employment. They can also request the transfer of their PDS card to Sulaymaniyah. To obtain or renew their CSID/UNID in Sulaymaniyah, individuals need to return to their place of origin.⁷⁵⁴

Issuance of residency permit for Arab and Turkmen single men and women

Normally, single Arab and Turkmen men and women are reported to be granted only a one-month renewable residency permit. In exceptional cases, they obtain a one-year, renewable residency card from the *Asayish*, only if they can secure regular employment and submit a support letter from their employer. UNHCR stated that, 'in practice, holders of a one-month residency card face difficulties in finding regular employment due to the short duration of their permits.' These individuals also face restrictions regarding the type and the location of rental accommodation.⁷⁵⁵

2.3.2. Economy

The city of Sulaymaniyah has a population of 780 000,⁷⁵⁶ with a predominantly Sunni Kurdish resident population, and smaller numbers of Shia Kurds, Sunni and Shia Arabs, Christians and other minorities residing there. Since 2014, the city has hosted primarily Sunni Arab IDPs from across conflict-affected governorates.⁷⁵⁷ The KRG economy relies heavily on oil exports and on budget transfers from federal government.⁷⁵⁸ Disagreements on oil and gas management between the KRG and the federal government, as well as between the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) (which runs Sulaymaniyah Governorate) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) have had an impact on the economic stability of Sulaymaniyah governorate. Among other grievances, the PUK accused the KRG of budget cuts. Insufficient funds have caused a wage crisis in Sulaymaniyah, resulting in delays of salary payments.⁷⁵⁹

In March 2023, the pipeline that transports oil from the KRI to Türkiye for onward export was shut down following an arbitration case⁷⁶⁰ ruled in favour of Baghdad. The ruling stated that Türkiye breached the 1973 pipeline agreement by allowing the KRG to pump and export oil without Baghdad's consent.⁷⁶¹ By the time of drafting, the KRI oil exports had not resumed yet.⁷⁶² The halting of oil exports through Türkiye since March 2023⁷⁶³ has had serious

⁷⁵⁴ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 15-16; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁷⁵⁵ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 15-16; UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 8 May 2024

⁷⁵⁶ World Bank, Iraq Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, 31 July 2023, [url](#), p. 3, footnote c

⁷⁵⁷ IOM, Cities as Home: Location Factsheets and Case Studies of Local Integration, 6 January 2021, [url](#), p. 18

⁷⁵⁸ SIPRI, Iraq in 2023: Challenges and prospects for peace and human security, 17 March 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁹ Washington Institute, PUK and KDP: A New Era of Conflict, 21 December 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁶⁰ Argus, No imminent Iraqi Kurdistan crude restart: KRG official, 16 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁶¹ The National, Iraq Export Pipeline Closure Wreaks Havoc on Kurdish Region Economy, 21 September 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁶² Rudaw, Oil producers ask US to discuss Kurdistan exports with PM Sudani, 16 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁶³ World Bank, Iraq Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, 31 July 2023, [url](#), p. 5



economic consequences in the region, due to loss in revenues and increasing fiscal pressure on the KRG. Oil production companies have been forced to cut salaries and lay off employees, while the regional government has been unable to pay public salaries and provide some services.⁷⁶⁴ Public sector workers held a series of protests in Sulaymaniyah city, as well as in other cities of the KRI, over unpaid salaries.⁷⁶⁵ A court decision issued on 21 February 2024 by the Federal Supreme Court of Iraq ordered the KRG to hand over all oil and non-oil revenues to Baghdad, *de facto* giving full control to the federal government on the KRG's finances. The same ruling also ordered the payment of public sector salaries in the KRI to be disbursed directly by the federal government rather than through the current system of monthly loans to the KRG.⁷⁶⁶

2.3.3. Employment

According to latest available data from 2021, the unemployment rate in Sulaymaniyah governorate was at 11.9 %.⁷⁶⁷ The public sector, which is marred by corruption and inefficiency, remains the largest employer in the KRI.⁷⁶⁸ In the past decade, the KRG has struggled to pay its civil servants on time,⁷⁶⁹ triggering protests⁷⁷⁰ and strikes.⁷⁷¹ Recruitment in both the public and the private sector is dominated by nepotism and cronyism along family, tribal, ethno-sectarian, and political lines.⁷⁷² The lack of employment opportunities in the KRI, especially among young people,⁷⁷³ has been a recurrent trigger for social unrest⁷⁷⁴ and migration (both rural-urban migration and emigration).⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁶⁴ Washington Institute, Renewing the KRG's Opposition Parties for 2024 Parliamentary Elections, 8 January 2024, [url](#); The National, Iraq Export Pipeline Closure Wreaks Havoc on Kurdish Region Economy, 21 September 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁶⁵ AP, Public sector workers in Iraq's Sulaymaniyah protest over unpaid salaries, 14 January 2024, via YouTube AP channel, [url](#); Rudaw, Striking teachers plan protest despite government promises, 7 January 2024, [url](#); France 24/AFP, Iraqi Kurds protest unpaid salaries from Baghdad, 5 September 2023, [url](#); Shafaq News, Employees in Al-Sulaymaniyah and Halabja Strike amid Salary Delays, 10 September 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁶⁶ Epic, ISHM: February 15 – 22 2024, 22 February 2024, [url](#); S&P Global, Iraqi federal court ruling deals another blow to Kurdistan regional government's oil autonomy, 22 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁶⁷ ILO/CSO/KRSO, Iraqi Labour Force Survey 2021, 5 July 2022, [url](#), p. 13

⁷⁶⁸ Wahab B., The Rise and Fall of Kurdish Power in Iraq, in: Middle East Report (306 Spring 2023), April 2023, [url](#)

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⁷⁷⁰ EPC, Sulaymaniyah-Erbil Disagreement: Scenarios of Division in Iraqi Kurdistan, 21 March 2021, [url](#); MRG, Minority and Indigenous Trends 2021 – Focus on Covid-19, 30 June 2021, [url](#), p. 154; AI, Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights, 7 April 2021, [url](#), p. 197

⁷⁷¹ New Arab, Iraqi Kurdistan Doctors, Teachers, and Garbage Collectors Go on Strike over Unpaid Salaries, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁷² Arab Reform Initiative, Understanding the Roots of the Younger Generations' Despair in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, 4 April 2023, [url](#); AP, Corruption, Deep Disparity Mark Iraq's Oil Legacy post-2003, 24 March 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁷³ CFRI, The Root Causes of Kurdish Iraqi Migration: Early Warnings of an Impending Youth Quake in the KRI, 13 July 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁴ ILO, Cost of Inaction: Education Deprivation in Iraq and the Potential of Social Protection to Reverse it, 7 March 2023, [url](#), p. 7; France24/AFP, Iraq's Young Covet Govt Jobs in Headache for Economy, 2 October 2022, [url](#); UNDP, Reimagining the Social Contract in Iraq, 1 June 2022, [url](#), pp. 17, 19

⁷⁷⁵ Rudaw, Kurdistan Region's Youth Blame Lack of Opportunities for Desire to Migrate, 6 September 2023, [url](#);

CFRI, The Root Causes of Kurdish Iraqi Migration: Early Warnings of an Impending Youth Quake in the KRI, 13 July 2022, [url](#); Rudaw, Youth from Sulaimani's Raparin migrate en masse due to lack of services, 4 September 2023, [url](#)



2.3.4. Poverty

Based on data by the Iraqi Ministry of Planning and cited by media outlets, poverty headcounts rates in 2021 stood between 12.5 % and 13 %, in the KRI.⁷⁷⁶ Particularly critical is poverty among IDPs and returnees in some governorates, including in Sulaymaniyah.⁷⁷⁷ As of December 2023, 8 % of the country's IDP population was situated in Sulaymaniyah governorate.⁷⁷⁸ As noted by UNHCR, many IDPs and returnees in Iraq, in both urban and rural areas, often face challenges in accessing basic services and employment, are more likely to be poor, food insecure, dependent on humanitarian aid and more exposed to violence, abuse, and exploitation.⁷⁷⁹

2.3.5. Food security

According to data by FAO and cited by the UN, 41 % of households in Iraq face moderate to severe food insecurity, with Anbar, Dohuk, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah most affected.⁷⁸⁰ As of 1 August 2023, Sulaymaniyah was characterised as the 11th among the governorates with the highest prevalence of crisis or above crisis level food-based coping strategies, affecting a total of 84 800 people.⁷⁸¹ Media sources reported that meat prices have seen an unprecedented increase in Iraq, and especially in the KRI, at the point where 'meat has begun to disappear from the tables of poor and low-income families.'⁷⁸² This is also the case in Sulaymaniyah, where citizens raised concerns about increase in prices, especially of meats but also other basic food materials.⁷⁸³

2.3.6. Healthcare

The quality and availability of healthcare in the KRI is described as slightly better than in the rest of Iraq,⁷⁸⁴ however much of the capacity is concentrated in urban areas.⁷⁸⁵ As of 2020, there were 1.6 hospital beds per 1 000 population in the KRI, the highest number being in Sulaymaniyah (1.8).⁷⁸⁶ Based on 2020 data by the Ministry of Health and environment, Sulaymaniyah had 63 hospitals, of which 38 were public (including 1 offering tertiary

⁷⁷⁶ Shafaq, Abject poverty inflicts less than 2% of the total poverty headcounts, official says, 27 April 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁷ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022: Iraq, 27 March 2022, [url](#), p. 81

⁷⁷⁸ UNCHR/DTM, Iraq - Population Profile - Breakdown Overview - IDPs and Returnees, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

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⁷⁸⁰ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, pp. 22-23, cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#), p. 75, footnote 536

⁷⁸¹ WFP, Hunger Map Live: Iraq insight and key trends, 1 August 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁷⁸² Shafaq, Iraqi Trade Minister addresses concerns over food reserve and meat prices, 22 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁸³ New Arab, As Ramadan approaches in Iraq, Food prices increase amid complaints of government inaction, 26 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁴ Australia, DFAT, Country Information Report Iraq, 16 January 2023, [url](#), p. 8; Sulaiman H. M., et al., Health System Performance, Mitigation, and Imperative Reform Approaches in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: A Qualitative SWOT Analysis from the Stakeholders' Point of View, in: Duhok Medical Journal, Vol. 17(1), 2023, [url](#), pp. 91-93

⁷⁸⁵ Sulaiman H. M., et al., Health System Performance, Mitigation, and Imperative Reform Approaches in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: A Qualitative SWOT Analysis from the Stakeholders' Point of View, in Duhok Medical Journal, Vol. 17(1), 2023, [url](#), pp. 90-93; Al Dabbagh S. A., et al., Workload Assessment of Medical Doctors at Primary Health Care Centers in the Duhok Governorate, in Human Resources for Health, Vol. 19, January 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁶ Sulaiman H. M., et al., Health System Performance, Mitigation, and Imperative Reform Approaches in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Vol. 17 Issue 1, 2023, [url](#), pp. 91-93



healthcare) and 25 were private.⁷⁸⁷ Data released by the KRG and reported by local media in 2023 showed a total of 135 hospitals (52 private and 83 public) and 1 470 health centres in the KRI, of which 16 % are located in cities, 32 % in districts, 11 % in sub-districts and 41 % in villages.⁷⁸⁸ On the occasion of the inauguration of a new specialised paediatric Intensive Care Unit (ICU) in Sulaymaniyah in 2023, a health authorities representative stated that scarcity of intensive care remains a significant problem, forcing citizens to resort to private hospitals, where costs range from 500 000 to 3 million Iraqi dinars per night.⁷⁸⁹ In April 2022, several public hospitals in Sulaymaniyah had to temporarily suspend their services due to shortages of medical supplies and medication, particularly for chronic diseases.⁷⁹⁰ Also, due to budget deficits, health workers went on strike during 2023, limiting health services beyond emergency and critical care.⁷⁹¹

2.3.7. Education

School completion rates in Sulaymaniyah governorate were 91 % for primary school, 72 % for lower secondary school and 45 % for upper secondary school. Out of school rates were 2 % on the primary, 9 % on the lower secondary and 20 % on the upper secondary levels.⁷⁹² As of 2021, illiteracy rate in Sulaymaniyah governorate stood at 24 %.⁷⁹³ In Sulaymaniyah, all Iraqis have access to education, regardless of their place of origin and ethno-religious profile,⁷⁹⁴ provided they hold civil documentation.⁷⁹⁵ For more information on access to education for children at country level see [1.4 Children](#). In 2023, over 58 000 teachers went on strike in Sulaymaniyah governorate over unpaid salaries, due to unresolved oil and financial disputes between KRG and Federal government.⁷⁹⁶ As of January 2024, most schools in Sulaymaniyah governorate (as well as in Halabja and the administrations of Garmiyan, Raparin, and Koya) had yet to open their doors for the new academic year which began in September 2023,⁷⁹⁷ as teachers were on strike.⁷⁹⁸ At the end of February 2024, KRG authorities announced teachers

⁷⁸⁷ Iraq, Ministry of Health and Environment, Annual Statistical Report 2020, 2021, [url](#), pp. 138,139, 141, 143

⁷⁸⁸ Kurdistan 24, KRG Ministry of Health publishes healthcare statistics, 31 July 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁹ Shafaq News, Al-Sulaymaniyah Inaugurates Iraq's Largest Pediatric ICU, 16 August 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁰ UN Iraq Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) / UNAMI Development Support Office (DSO), Field Report Issue 22, 23 July 2022, [url](#), pp. 3-5; Sulaiman H. M., et al., Health System Performance, Mitigation, and Imperative Reform Approaches in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Vol. 17 Issue 1, 2023, [url](#), 82; Esta Media Network, Official Says Sulaimani Pediatric Hospital ICU Section Suspended Works; Live of many Are at Risk, 13 December 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹¹ Rudaw, Patients, Students, Civil Servants Lose in Erbil, Baghdad Money Row, 17 September 2023, [url](#); Shafaq, Employees in Al-Sulaymaniyah and Halabja Strike amid Salary Delays, 10 September 2023, [url](#); AFP, Iraqi Kurds Protest Unpaid Salaries from Baghdad, 5 September 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹² UNICEF, Iraq Education Fact Sheet 2020 – Analyses for learning and equity using MICS data, 2020, [url](#), pp. 9, 15

⁷⁹³ Iraq, MoP, The Second National Voluntary Review Report on the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, July 2021, [url](#), p. 99

⁷⁹⁴ UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, [url](#), p. 15

⁷⁹⁵ DRC, Life in the Margins, September 2022, [url](#); HRW, World Report 2024, Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); AI, Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁶ Iraq Oil Report, Two-month teachers' strike underscores severity of Baghdad-Erbil problems, 21 September 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁷ Rudaw, Striking teachers plan protest despite government promises, 7 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁸ Kirkuk Now, Sulaymaniyah Teachers under Pressure Arresting Organizers of Demonstrations, Threats of Dismissal, 22 January 2024, [url](#)



had returned to classrooms after months of strike.⁷⁹⁹ Like in the rest of Iraq,⁸⁰⁰ KRI lacks sufficient number of classrooms and qualified teachers to accommodate education for the growing number of young students. For instance, in Ranya, in Sulaymaniyah governorate, a shift system is in place, which limits students' class time to just four hours per school daily. Most schools are reported to operate on a two-shift system, while some schools are forced to use a three-shift system due to the lack of space and large number of students.⁸⁰¹

2.3.8. Housing and living conditions

The demand for housing has been growing in Sulaymaniyah, with people moving from the villages to the city for employment opportunities.⁸⁰² Like in Federal Iraq,⁸⁰³ to address the housing crisis,⁸⁰⁴ the KRG authorities are planning the construction of affordable housing units in various areas of the KRI, including in Sulaymaniyah.⁸⁰⁵ The power system in the KRI is more reliable,⁸⁰⁶ but electricity shortages are still common,⁸⁰⁷ including in Sulaymaniyah.⁸⁰⁸ For information on civil documentation needed for accessing housing, see [Entry, residency requirements and access to civil documentation and services](#) [2.3.1. Entry, residency requirements and access to civil documentation and services](#).

2.3.9. Water and sanitation

The KRI, including Sulaymaniyah,⁸⁰⁹ is experiencing water shortages and long periods of drought,⁸¹⁰ which are becoming pressing issue threatening the general well-being of the population. The river Tanjaro, located in Sulaymaniyah city, is reported to be polluted with untreated waste, oils, and harmful metals from factories, waste sites, and refineries. This water flows into the Darbandikhan Dam reservoir, which provides drinking water to hundreds of thousands people. The polluted water then continues to flow downstream, eventually into the Tigris River and the Gulf, affecting many communities along the way.⁸¹¹ Due to lack of safe

⁷⁹⁹ Shafaq, Kurdistan education minister announces Sulaymaniyah teachers' return, unveils development strategy, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁰ UN Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2023, January 2024, p. 45, cited in UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regards to People Fleeing Iraq, 30 January 2024, [url](#), p. 84, footnote 615

⁸⁰¹ Al-Monitor, In Iraq's Kurdistan Region, Teacher Strikes Highlight Schooling Crisis, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰² Jamal Ali, B. et al., Factors Shaping Customer Satisfaction with Residential Flats: Evidence from Sulaymaniyah City, 10 May 2021, [url](#), pp. 1-2

⁸⁰³ Iraqi News, The Prime Minister Announces the Establishment of a New Residential City in Dhi Qar, 5 January 2024, [url](#); Zawya, Iraq to Invite Developers to 5 New City Projects, 2 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁴ Shafaq, Trumping Kurdistan, Real Estate Prices 'Spark Uproar' in Al-Anbar, 21 August 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁵ Bas News, KRG to Build Housing Units for Low-income Earners, 16 May 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁶ Rudaw, Garmiyan Village Residents Leave amid Water Scarcity, 29 October 2023, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2023: Iraq, 4 October 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁷ Shafaq, Kurdistan Region Ministry of Electricity Releases Statistics on Power Infrastructure and Subscribers, 29 August 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, Protesters block Sulaimani-Erbil road over electricity shortages, 2 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁸ Draw Media, Slemani Is Going to Run Out of Electricity, 12 January 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁹ Washington Kurdish Institute, In the Midst of the Riparians: Kurdistan's position at the center of an impending water crisis in the Tigris-Euphrates River Basin, 15 February 2023, [url](#)

⁸¹⁰ Raseef22, Thirsty for Solutions: Erbil's Escalating Water Crisis Amidst Rapid Urbanization and Climate Change, 2 August 2023, [url](#); Rudaw, Several Erbil Neighbourhoods Suffer from Lack of Water, 13 July 2023, [url](#); AFP, Iraq's Mesopotamian Marshlands Are Dying at an Alarming Rate, 13 July 2023, [url](#)

⁸¹¹ Rudaw Research Centre, Navigating Water Scarcity in the Kurdistan Region: Challenges, Causes, and Crucial Solutions, 28 August 2023, [url](#)



water, poor sanitation and hygiene, Iraq saw a cholera outbreak in 2022⁸¹² mostly affecting the governorates of Sulaymaniyah, Al Muthanna, Baghdad, Kirkuk, Babel, Thi Qar, and Al Qadisiyyah.⁸¹³ Between August⁸¹⁴ and September 2023, health authorities confirmed 130 cases of cholera in Sulaymaniyah, along with several other cases registered in Erbil.⁸¹⁵

⁸¹² IFRC, Iraq: Cholera Epidemic-Emergency Plan of Action (EPoA), DREF n° MDRIQ01, 7 July 2022, [url](#), pp. 1-2, 13

⁸¹³ IFRC, Iraq: Cholera Epidemic-Emergency Plan of Action (EPoA), DREF n° MDRIQ015, 1 December 2023, [url](#), pp. 1

⁸¹⁴ Rudaw, 10 confirmed cases of cholera: Sulaimani health, 31 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸¹⁵ Rudaw, 130 confirmed cholera cases in Sulaimani, says health minister, 14 September 2023, [url](#)





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Annex 2: Terms of Reference

Targeting of individuals

- **Persons perceived to be opposing the state and state-affiliated actors**
 - Specific profiles potentially interpreted by the state as opposition:
 - Members of political opposition parties
 - Political activists and protesters
 - Journalists
 - Human rights activists
 - Persons with (perceived) affiliation to ISIL
 - Treatment of family members

- **Ethno-religious minorities**
 - Overview of situation and treatment of ethno-religious groups (e.g. Sunnis, Christians, Yazidis, Turkmen etc.) by different actors
 - Legal framework on conversion, atheism, inter-religious/inter-sect marriages

- **Women**
 - Overview of situation of women in both Federal Iraq and the KRI: rights, discrimination, gender-based violence
 - Honour violence and treatment of women in tribal disputes (e.g. *fasilya* marriages)
 - Treatment of single/divorced/widowed women (including single women heads of households)

- **Children**
 - Violence against children
 - Situation of children without support network/family or living in female headed households
 - Child recruitment by armed groups
 - Child labour, child marriage etc.
 - Access to education
 - Risk of statelessness

- **LGBTIQ**
 - Legal framework and implementation





- Treatment of LGBTIQ persons by state authorities/armed actors/society/family/community
- **Individuals perceived to transgress moral and religious norms**
 - Treatment of individuals whose behaviour or appearance are perceived as transgression of moral and religious norms (e.g. tattoos, women's clothing, striking men's hairstyles, alcohol consumption)
 - Treatment of atheists, converts and perceived apostates or blasphemers by state authorities/armed actors/society/family/community
 - Treatment of individuals in inter-sect/inter-faith marriages

Key Socio-economic indicators for Baghdad and Sulaymaniyah

- Legal and administrative requirements to enter and to settle in the respective city and their application in practice (including specific rules for different categories of individuals)
- Access to civil documentation and documentation requirements for access to services
- Freedom of movement
- Economy
- Employment
- Poverty
- Food security
- Healthcare
- Education
- Housing and living conditions
- Water and sanitation





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