



COI QUERY

Country of Origin	Iraq
Title	Situation of Kurdish women who are remarried in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), including treatment by society; prevalence of forced marriage between Kurdish families in the KRI
Reference period	January 2022 to 6 January 2025
Topic(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Situation of Kurdish women who are remarried in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), including treatment by society2. Prevalence of forced marriage between Kurdish families in the KRI
Date of completion	7 January 2025
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COI QUERY RESPONSE – Iraq

Situation of Kurdish women who are remarried in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), including treatment by society; prevalence of forced marriage between Kurdish families in the KRI

1. Situation of Kurdish women who are remarried in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), including treatment by society

A 2022 participant study published by Tufts University and conducted by a research project called Leave No One Behind, which studies female youth and early marriage in displacement and conflict settings, described that participants from the Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI) viewed remarriage ‘as a so-called “solution” to reduce the stigma linked to being divorced’.¹ Participants in the study stated that divorced women were ‘the most vulnerable members of their communities because of extreme social exclusion, violence, and poor mental health’.² Furthermore, widowed participants viewed remarriage as solution to the ‘current negative circumstances linked to widowhood’³ and was considered by families as ‘a way to alleviate financial problems and severe restrictions in the widows’ movements’.⁴ However, the study noted that other widowed participants were against remarrying, with some stating that ‘they would not be able to take the children with them to the new marriage’ because the new husband or in-laws of the deceased husband would refuse.⁵

Further information on the situation of Kurdish women who are remarried in the KRI could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraint.

2. Prevalence of forced marriage between Kurdish families in the KRI

‘Forced and early marriages are common, especially in the context of displacement and poverty’⁶ and they were reported to occur throughout the country,⁷ including in the Kurdish

¹ Tufts University, LNOB, Circumscribed Lives: Separated, Divorced, and Widowed Female Youth in South Sudan and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, August 2022, [url](#), p. 14

² Tufts University, LNOB, Circumscribed Lives: Separated, Divorced, and Widowed Female Youth in South Sudan and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, August 2022, [url](#), p. 15

³ Tufts University, LNOB, Circumscribed Lives: Separated, Divorced, and Widowed Female Youth in South Sudan and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, August 2022, [url](#), p. 21

⁴ Tufts University, LNOB, Circumscribed Lives: Separated, Divorced, and Widowed Female Youth in South Sudan and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, August 2022, [url](#), p. 21

⁵ Tufts University, LNOB, Circumscribed Lives: Separated, Divorced, and Widowed Female Youth in South Sudan and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, August 2022, [url](#), p. 21

⁶ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 – Iraq, 2024, [url](#)

⁷ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 67



region.⁸ Forced marriage is criminalised in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.⁹ However, forced marriages ‘occur in Iraq as the laws are often not enforced’ and sometimes women were forced to marry for the family’s financial benefit, or they are married off to settle a family or tribal feud.¹⁰

Although the legal minimum age of marriage was 18 in the KRI,¹¹ the Personal Status Law of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Act No. 15, stipulates that ‘if a 16-year-old person asks to be married, the judge can authorize his marriage if the eligibility and physical ability of the person in question was proven to him, after obtaining the approval of his legal guardian’.¹² According to the 2023 United States Department of State (USDOS) Country Report on Iraq, the KRG ‘did not automatically void, forced marriages that were consummated’.¹³

Iraq and the KRI have ‘experienced a spike in cases of early marriages’ in the past 10 years, and the numbers in the KRI are ‘slightly less’ but ‘not significantly better’ than the rest of Iraq, according to a June 2022 article by Rudaw, a news source, citing the United Nations Population Fund’s (UNFPA).¹⁴

The same source added that ‘some Kurdish men crossed over into other areas of the country to acquire a child bride, since the federal laws were not as strict’.¹⁵ Refugees and internally displaced persons in the KRI engaged in child marriage ‘at a higher rate’ than other KRI residents.¹⁶ 81 cases of forced marriage were recorded in the KRI from 2018 to June 2023 according to a local news source called Shafaq, citing official statistics.¹⁷ Corroborating information could not be found.

Early marriages continued ‘due to conflict and economic instability, since many families arranged for girls to marry cousins or into polygamous households’.¹⁸ Further, USDOS noted that ‘others gave their daughters as child brides to armed groups to ensure safety, access to public services, or livelihood opportunities for the entire family’.¹⁹

A September 2024 article by the Borgen Project, a non-profit organisation aiming at reducing global poverty, affirmed that in the Kurdistan region, child marriages were often concluded informally outside courts and remained unregistered, ‘leading to the underreporting of actual rates’.²⁰ The source further noted that despite laws setting a minimum marriage age and requiring registration, weak enforcement allowed these practices to persist ‘without legal

⁸ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report—Iraq (February 1, 2021 to January 31, 2023), 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 8

⁹ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 68

¹⁰ Rudaw, Increase in early marriages in Iraq, Kurdistan Region: UNFPA representative, 12 June 2022, [url](#)

¹¹ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 68

¹² Iraq – KRI, Amended Personal Status Law, as applicable in the KR-I (Law No. 15 of 2008), 13 November 2008, [url](#)

¹³ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 68

¹⁴ Rudaw, Increase in early marriages in Iraq, Kurdistan Region: UNFPA representative, 12 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 68

¹⁶ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 68

¹⁷ Shafaq, Official statistics of women’s suicides, FGM, and forced marriage in Kurdistan, 21 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 67

¹⁹ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 23 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 67-68

²⁰ Borgen Project (The), What You Need to Know about Child Marriage in Iraqi Kurdistan, 6 September 2024, [url](#)



repercussions'.²¹ Human Rights Watch (HRW) confirmed that unregistered marriages in Iraq were 'often done as a way to circumvent legal restrictions' on child marriage and forced marriage.²²

A 2022 study covering early marriage in the KRI, published by Tufts University as part of the Leave No One Behind research project, described that forced marriages were 'generally orchestrated by male family members (fathers, uncles, brothers) of the girls and young women'.²³ The study described that they were 'abused by immediate and extended family' through physical, emotional, sexual violence and social deprivation, 'in order to force a marriage'.²⁴ The study further noted that forced marriage often followed the disclosure of romantic relationships, as emotional attachments or any form of romantic contact with males is widely considered unacceptable for girls.²⁵ Such relationships risked community gossip, harassment, and family reputation, leading some girls to be forced into marriage, as described in the participant study.²⁶

Further information on the prevalence of forced marriage between Kurdish families in the KRI could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraint.

²¹ Borgen Project (The), What You Need to Know about Child Marriage in Iraqi Kurdistan, 6 September 2024, [url](#)

²² HRW, World Report 2024 – Iraq, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

²³ Tufts University, LNOB, Perspectives on early marriage: the voices of female youth in Iraqi Kurdistan and South Sudan who married under age 18, May 2022, [url](#), p. 13

²⁴ Tufts University, LNOB, Perspectives on early marriage: the voices of female youth in Iraqi Kurdistan and South Sudan who married under age 18, May 2022, [url](#), p. 14

²⁵ Tufts University, LNOB, Perspectives on early marriage: the voices of female youth in Iraqi Kurdistan and South Sudan who married under age 18, May 2022, [url](#), p. 13

²⁶ Tufts University, LNOB, Perspectives on early marriage: the voices of female youth in Iraqi Kurdistan and South Sudan who married under age 18, May 2022, [url](#), p. 13



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