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Iraq: Country Focus

EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR ASYLUM

Iraq: Country Focus

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Cover photo: MOSUL, IRAQ - FEBRUARY 17: Children carry Ramadan lanterns as they walk through the Old City to celebrate the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan in Mosul, Iraq, on February 17, 2026. (Photo by Ismael Adnan Yaqoob/Anadolu via Getty Images), Getty Images, 2026, Children carry Ramadan lanterns as they walk through the Old City to... News Photo - Getty Images

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- The Netherlands, Office for Country Information and Language Analysis, Ministry of Justice (OCILA)
- Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Country of Origin Information, Section for Information Analysis.

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.

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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 the 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 15 September 2026. 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
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
Asayish	Internal security and intelligence services of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq
CJTF-OIR	Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve
CTS	Counter Terrorism Services
DTM	IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War
Fasliya	A practice of trading women/girls to settle tribal disputes
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
Ghasl al-yar	Shame-washing; action taken, such as honour killing, to remove shame
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
Ikhbar	A tribal procedure aimed at reporting a relative with perceived affiliation to ISIL
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces

Term	Definition
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant; also known as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Islamic State (IS), or Daesh
***Ja'afari* school**	School of Shia Islamic jurisprudence
***Ja'afari* Personal Status Code**	The *Jaʿafari* Personal Status Code is a codified set of rules governing family and personal-status matters, including marriage, divorce, custody, inheritance, and related issues, based on the *Jaʿafari* school of Shiʿa Islamic jurisprudence.
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
Marjaʿ al-taqlīd (Marjaʿ)	A highly qualified Twelver Shiʿi jurist recognised as an authoritative source of religious and legal guidance whom followers may emulate in matters of Islamic law (Plural: *Maraji'*)
Mudawana	Personal Status Code
Mukhtar	Local community leader
PDS	Public Distribution System card for food assistance
Peshmerga	Military forces of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq Kurdistan
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party. The PKK is on the European Union's list of designated groups which have been involved in terrorism, as well as being listed as a terrorist organisation by Türkiye, the United States, and Australia.

Term	Definition
PMF	Popular Mobilization Forces or Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), also called *Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi* in Arabic
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
Tabriya	A tribal procedure aimed at disowning a person, e.g., in cases of affiliation with ISIL
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide relevant information for the assessment of international protection status determination, including refugee status and subsidiary protection.

The report provides information on the treatment of selected profiles by state and non-state actors as well as on humanitarian and socio-economic situation in the country. The reference period is 1 August 2025 – 31 July 2026.

The report is to be read as a partial update of the EUAA COI report: Iraq - Country Focus, October 2025.

Methodology

This report was drafted by the EUAA and reviewed by EUAA and national COI departments in EU+ countries, as mentioned in the Acknowledgments 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] It is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced.

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. 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 and electronic sources as well as interviews with experts until 18 August 2026. Some limited additional information was added during the finalisation of this report in response to feedback received during the quality control process, until 15 September 2026.

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**Error! Reference source not found.** 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

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

finalised on 15 September 2026. EUAA also performed the final quality review and editing of the text.

Sources

In accordance with EUAA COI methodology, a range of different published documentary sources have been consulted on relevant topics for this report. These include: COI reports by governments; information from civil society, advocacy groups, humanitarian organisations, and NGOs; international and NGO human rights reports; reports produced by various bodies of the United Nations; Iraq and regionally-based media; academic publications, think tank reports and specialised sources covering Iraq. 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 and the chapters on Palestinians in Iraq rely extensively on information provided by UNHCR. 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's first chapter provides information on the general human rights situation in the country and 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. Thereafter, chapter 2 outlines the humanitarian and socio-economic situation, including updates on requirements needed to enter and settle in some governorates/cities, and the requirements needed to access civil documentation and services.

Maps



Map 1. Iraq.[3]

[3] Map 1: UN, Iraq - Map No. 3835 Rev. 6, July 2014

1. Human rights and treatment of specific profiles

1.1. General human rights situation

Iraq is party to the principal international human rights treaties,[4] including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC),[5] the Convention against Torture (CAT)[6] and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.[7] In December 2025, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) confirmed the downgrade of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) from 'A' to 'B' status, citing its continued failure to comply with the Paris Principles concerning independence and effectiveness.[8]

Over the reference period, serious human rights challenges persisted,[9] including in the domain of freedom of expression, the rights of minorities and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), the protection of journalists and civil society actors.[10] Amnesty International reported that Iraqi security forces, armed militias, and political actors continued to commit serious human rights violations with almost complete impunity.[11] Despite Iraq's international human rights obligations, significant gaps in accountability persist, including in relation to serious human rights violations, violence and corruption.[12] Furthermore, despite the availability of formal reintegration mechanisms for Iraqi returnees from camps in northeastern Syria, including through the Al-Amal Centre for Psychological and Social Rehabilitation in Ninewa governorate,[13] and complementary community-based reconciliation initiatives,[14] persons perceived to have affiliations with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continued to face significant challenges in reintegrating into their communities.[15] In particular, individuals

[4] For an overview of the human rights treaties signed and ratified by Iraq, see: OHCHR, Iraq: Treaty Status, url
[5] GHRD, The Yazidi Survivors Law and Iraq's Unmet Obligations Under International Human Rights Law, 10 April 2026, url
[6] ICNL, Civic Freedom Monitor, updated on 23 June 2026, url
[7] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 209
[8] GANHRI Sub-Committee on Accreditation Report – 46th Session – October 2025, Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (Ganhri), 20-30 October 2025, url, pp. 4, 43-46; CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 20 May 2026, url, para 21; MENA Rights Group, Iraq's National Human Rights Institution downgraded over ineffectiveness concerns, 8 December 2025, url
[9] UN Iraq, Annual Results Report 2025, 19 June 2026, url, p. 20
[10] UN Iraq, Annual Results Report 2025, 19 June 2026, url, p. 20
[11] AI, The State's of World Human Rights, 21 April 2026, url
[12] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url; Jummar Media, "Election cycles tend to be nothing but seasons of performativity", 6 November 2025, url; AI, Iraq: Ensure accountability for killing of women's rights activist Yanar Mohammed, 4 March 2026, url
[13] UNDP, Spain, UNDP, and the Government of Iraq Strengthen Support for the Reintegration of Iraqis Returning from Al-Hol Camp, 27 January 2026, url
[14] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 10
[15] ICCT, Case Management of Iraqi Adult Returnees in al-Amal: Drawing Lessons from Comparable Contexts, February 2026, url; UNIDIR, Reintegrating Iraqis Returning Home After Conflict: Lessons from Variation Between Four Communities, January 2025, url, p. 31

with perceived affiliation to ISIL, including women and children returning from Al-Hol camp, continued to face significant social stigma,[16] with rejection by families and community presenting important barriers to sustainable reintegration.[17]

Sporadic violence and clashes involving armed groups and federal security forces continued to pose risks to civilians and reflected the state's ongoing difficulties in exercising effective authority over certain armed actors.[18] Concerns also persisted regarding the growing influence of Iran-aligned armed groups over state institutions and strategic sectors, including telecommunications.[19]

Iraq also witnessed significant regression in women's rights.[20] Domestic violence is said to be on the rise,[21] while women's right defenders faced a lack of accountability for violations against them.[22] In January 2025, Parliament adopted amendments to the Personal Status Law significantly expanding the role of religious authorities in family law,[23] raising concerns regarding women's rights.[24] Domestic and gender-based violence remained widespread,[25] while authorities failed to ensure accountability or provide adequate services.[26]

Freedom of expression and civic space remained restricted.[27] Authorities continued to rely on broadly worded provisions concerning 'public morality' and 'indecent content' to prosecute critics, activists, journalists and social media content creators.[28] These restrictions occurred alongside continued shortcomings in accountability for serious human rights violations.[29] As reported by Amnesty International, the authorities failed to hold perpetrators accountable for violations committed during the conflict with ISIL and the Tishreen protests.[30] Numerous investigations announced by successive governments were not made public,[31] while judicial proceedings remained limited in scope and often resulted in acquittals because of insufficient

[16] AI, The State's of World Human Rights, 21 April 2026, url
[17] ICCT, Case Management of Iraqi Adult Returnees in al-Amal: Drawing Lessons from Comparable Contexts, February 2026, url; UNIDIR, Reintegrating Iraqis Returning Home After Conflict: Lessons from Variation Between Four Communities, January 2025, url, p. 31; UN Women, Understanding the Lives of the Women, Men and Children of Al-Hol Camp (2025), url, pp. 123-126
[18] HRW, Annual report on human rights situation in 2025, 4 February 2026, url
[19] M. Knights, Rise of the E-Militias: Designated Terrorist Groups Infest Iraq's Digital Economy, CTC Sentinel, November/December 2025, url, pp. 63, 68, 70
[20] Musawah, Thematic Report on Muslim Family Law and Muslim Women's Rights in Iraq, February 2026, url, p. 3
[21] New Arab (The), Sharp rise in violence against women in Iraq amid calls for new anti-domestic violence law, 23 February 2026, url
[22] AI, Iraq: Ensure accountability for killing of women's rights activist Yanar Mohammed, 4 March 2026, url
[23] GCHR, GCHR's 36th Periodic Report on Human Rights Violations in Iraq, 27 October 2025, url
[24] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url
[25] GCHR, GCHR's 35th Periodic Report on Human Rights Violations in Iraq, 14 April 2026, url
[26] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 211
[27] UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para 61; GCHR, GCHR's 37th Periodic Report on Human Rights Violations in Iraq, 14 April 2026, url
[28] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 66; New Arab (The), Yanar Mohammed: Remembering Iraq's prominent feminist and lifelong defender of women's rights, 3 March 2026, url UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 30 May 2025, url, paras 52, 54
[29] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url; Jummar Media, "Election cycles tend to be nothing but seasons of performativity", 6 November 2025, url
[30] AI, The State's of World Human Rights, 21 April 2026, url; MENA Rights Group, Iraq: additional information submitted to the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances, url
[31] AI, The State's of World Human Rights, 21 April 2026, url

evidence.[32] Survivors and relatives of victims continued to encounter obstacles in accessing reparations.[33] Activists associated with the Tishreen protests continued to face enforced disappearance, judicial harassment,[34] arrests, raids and intimidation in what Amnesty International described as a 'revenge campaign'.[35] Government authorities continued to impose restrictive regulatory requirements on civil society organisations, including background checks and interference in programme activities. Reductions in international assistance, including the closure of programmes funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), exacerbated the operational challenges faced by local NGOs.[36]

The use of torture and ill-treatment during arrest and detention continued to be reported.[37] Iraqi prisons remained severely overcrowded and faced shortages of healthcare and other basic services,[38] resulting in conditions described as 'cruel and inhuman'.[39] As of February 2026, Iraq had 30 prisons[40] housing roughly 67 000 inmates,[41] while the actual capacity of penal institutions does not exceed 25 000.[42] However, these figures do not include prisons in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) or detainees held by security forces and various armed groups elsewhere in Iraq.[43] Delays or denial of access to healthcare,[44] medical neglect[45], deaths in custody, torture,[46] sexual assault[47] and poor detention conditions continued to be reported, while effective investigations into deaths in detention remained absent.[48] Following the transitional government's assumption of control over Al-Hol camp in Syria,[49] more than 5 700 detainees were transferred from northeastern Syria to Iraq between January and

[32] AI, The State's of World Human Rights, 21 April 2026, url,
[33] AI, The State's of World Human Rights, 21 April 2026, url,
[34] MENA Rights Group, Iraq: additional information submitted to the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances, February 2026, url, p. 8
[35] AI, The State's of World Human Rights, 21 April 2026, url
[36] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 210
[37] AI, Iraq: Government must chart a new course by ending impunity and upholding human rights, 17 August 2026, url; IOHR, At least 400 detainees died in Iraqi prisons in 2025, 26 May 2026, url
[38] AI, Iraq: Government must chart a new course by ending impunity and upholding human rights, 17 August 2026, url; IOHR, At least 400 detainees died in Iraqi prisons in 2025, 26 May 2026, url
[39] AI, Iraq: Government must chart a new course by ending impunity and upholding human rights, 17 August 2026, url
[40] HRW, Iraq: Alleged ISIS Detainees Transferred from Syria at Risk of Abuse, 17 February 2026, url
[41] HRW, Iraq: Alleged ISIS Detainees Transferred from Syria at Risk of Abuse, 17 February 2026, url; IOHR, At least 400 detainees died in Iraqi prisons in 2025, 26 May 2026, url
[42] IOHR, At least 400 detainees died in Iraqi prisons in 2025, 26 May 2026, url
[43] HRW, Iraq: Alleged ISIS Detainees Transferred from Syria at Risk of Abuse, 17 February 2026, url
[44] AI, Iraq: Government must chart a new course by ending impunity and upholding human rights, 17 August 2026, url
[45] AI, Iraq: Government must chart a new course by ending impunity and upholding human rights, 17 August 2026, url; IOHR, At least 400 detainees died in Iraqi prisons in 2025, 26 May 2026, url
[46] IOHR, At least 400 detainees died in Iraqi prisons in 2025, 26 May 2026, url
[47] Shafaq News, Two sexual assault cases lead to five detentions in Najaf, 5 August 2026, url; Shafaq News, Al-Diwaniyah detainee rape case: Four jailed for 10 years, 10 August 2026, url
[48] IOHR, At least 400 detainees died in Iraqi prisons in 2025, 26 May 2026, url
[49] NRC, Syria: Insecurity around Al Hol Camp forces suspension of critical aid services aid agencies warn, 24 January 2026, url

February 2026,[50] placing additional pressure on Iraq's already overstretched detention and judicial systems[51] (see section 1.4.3 on Return of persons with perceived affiliation to ISIL).

Enforced disappearances remained a major human rights concern.[52] Iraq remained among the countries with the highest numbers of missing and disappeared persons worldwide.[53] Estimates range from 250 000 to one million over the past five decades.[54] Despite being a party to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance,[55] Iraq had not adopted legislation establishing enforced disappearance as a distinct criminal offence,[56] and the draft Law on the Protection of Persons from Enforced Disappearance remained pending before Parliament.[57] Threats and reprisals against relatives of disappeared persons, lawyers, civil society organisations and human rights defenders seeking accountability have also been reported.[58] Cases linked to the Tishreen protests, including those of activist Sajjad al-Iraqi and several journalists whose whereabouts remain unknown, remained unresolved.[59]

The death penalty remained in force in federal Iraq,[60] while the KRG maintained a de facto moratorium since 2008.[61] Iraq continued to rely extensively on capital punishment, particularly for terrorism-related offences, and an estimated 8 000 prisoners remained on death row[62] despite well-documented fair trial violations.[63] In February 2026, Iraqi authorities carried out the execution of six individuals convicted of terrorism-related offences,[64] marking the first mass execution since the temporary suspension of executions following the adoption of the General Amnesty Law in January 2025.[65] The number of executions remained unclear, while

[50] HRW, Iraq: Alleged ISIS Detainees Transferred from Syria at Risk of Abuse, 17 February 2026, url; Asharq Al Awsat, US Military Completes Transfer of 5,700 ISIS Detainees from Syria to Iraq, 13 February 2026, url; EPIC, ISHM, ISHM: February 12 – 19, 2026, 19 February 2026, url
[51] Irregular Warfare Initiative, Al-Hol's Collapse: How Syria's Detention Crisis is Enabling Islamic State Resilience Al-Hol Collapse: Syria Detention Crisis & IS Resilience, 10 April 2026, url; HRW, Iraq: Alleged ISIS Detainees Transferred from Syria at Risk of Abuse, 17 February 2026, url; EPIC, ISHM, ISHM: February 12 – 19, 2026, 19 February 2026, url
[52] UN OHCHR, UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances publishes findings on Ecuador, Iraq, Malawi and Samoa, 25 March 2026, url
[53] MENA Rights Group, Iraq -Alternative report-, Report submitted to the Committee on Enforced Disappearance (CED) on its 30th session in the context of the review of Iraq's follow up report, February 2026, url, p. 5
[54] UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024) Report of the Secretary-General, 30 May 2025, url, para. 56
[55] AI, The State's of World Human Rights, April 2026, url
[56] AI, The State's of World Human Rights, April 2026, url; MENA Rights Group, Iraq -Alternative report-, Report submitted to the Committee on Enforced Disappearance (CED) on its 30th session in the context of the review of Iraq's follow up report, February 2026, url, p. 10
[57] AI, The State's of World Human Rights, April 2026, url
[58] UN OHCHR, UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances publishes findings on Ecuador, Iraq, Malawi and Samoa, 25 March 2026, url; MENA Rights Group, Iraq -Alternative report-, Report submitted to the Committee on Enforced Disappearance (CED) on its 30th session in the context of the review of Iraq's follow up report, February 2026, url, p. 8
[59] MENA Rights Group, Iraq: additional information submitted to the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances, February 2026, url, p. 8
[60] AI, The State's of World Human Rights, April 2026, url
[61] HRW, World Report 2025 – Iraq, 16 January 2025, url
[62] HRW, Annual report on human rights situation in 2025, 4 February 2026, url
[63] AI, Iraq: Government must chart a new course by ending impunity and upholding human rights, 17 August 2026, url
[64] HRW, Annual report on human rights situation in 2025, 4 February 2026, url
[65] HRW, Iraq: Alleged ISIS Detainees Transferred from Syria at Risk of Abuse, 17 February 2026, url

most of death sentences carried out in 2025 were related to terrorism and drug offences. [66] CEDAW noted the disproportionate impact of capital punishment on women in a context of gender bias and tolerance of so-called 'honour'-based violence, as well as the absence of publicly available gender-disaggregated data on death penalty cases.[67]

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) ceased operations on 31 December 2025 following a request by the Iraqi authorities,[68] marking the first year since 2003 without the UN mission's presence in Iraq.[69] During its fourth Universal Periodic Review in January 2025, Iraq received 263 recommendations,[70] supporting 181,[71] with states expressing concerns on several topics, including the death penalty, restrictions to freedom of expression, impunity for human rights violations, discrimination against women and shortcomings in the protection of IDPs.[72]

Several key draft laws aimed at strengthening human rights protections remained pending before Parliament, including draft legislation on domestic violence,[73] children's law,[74] enforced disappearances,[75] freedom of expression,[76] and cybercrime law.[77]

Corruption continued to undermine governance and public service delivery in Iraq.[78] In June 2026, authorities launched the nationwide 'Dawn Crackdown' against current and former officials, lawmakers and business figures over alleged embezzlement and abuse of office.[79] Shafaq News reported that at least 210 people were detained in the campaign's first six weeks,[80] with authorities stating that the operation aims to recover stolen funds and prosecute those implicated.[81] Those arrested included several parliamentarians, Azm Party leader Muthanna al-Samarrai[82] and Deputy Oil Minister Ali Maarij al-Bahadly,[83] who was previously sanctioned by the US over alleged diversion of Iraqi oil revenues to Iran-linked actors.[84] The

[66] AI, The State's of World Human Rights, April 2026, url, p. 211
[67] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 20 May 2026, url, para 17 (c)
[68] UN in Iraq, UNAMI, For Iraq 2024, 10 June 2025, url, p. 6; UN News, In Baghdad, Guterres hails 'new chapter' in Iraq as UN mission draws to a close, 13 December 2025, url; AI, The State's of World Human Rights, April 2026, url
[69] EPIC, Ten Key Stories to Watch in Iraq in 2026, 1 January 2026, url
[70] MENA Rights Group, Iraq's human rights record assessed during its fourth Universal Periodic Review, 27 March 2025, url; HRW, Annual report on human rights situation in 2025, 4 February 2026, url
[71] UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para. 55
[72] MENA Rights Group, Iraq's human rights record assessed during its fourth Universal Periodic Review, 27 March 2025, url; HRW, Annual report on human rights situation in 2025, 4 February 2026, url
[73] HRW, Annual report on human rights situation in 2025, 4 February 2026, url; UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para 79; UNSC, Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security of the Security Council, S/2025/843, 23 December 2025, url, p. 3
[74] Government of Iraq, Common core document forming part of the reports of States Parties; Iraq [11 April 2025], 3 October 2025, url, para. 133
[75] AI, The State's of World Human Rights, April 2026, url
[76] Shafaq News, Iraq's press freedom index falls amid armed factions kidnappings, record violations, 5 May 2026, url
[77] Jummar Media, Iraq's Cybercrime Law: Increasing suspicion instead of improving regulation, 6 July 2026, url
[78] AI, The State's of World Human Rights, April 2026, url
[79] EPIC, ISHM: June 25 – July 2, 2026, 2 July 2026, url
[80] Shafaq News, Corruption arrests in Iraq pass 210 under PM al-Zaidi, 10 August 2026, url
[81] EPIC, ISHM: June 25 – July 2, 2026, 2 July 2026, url
[82] ICG, Iraq is Targeting Corruption, but the Future of Reform is Uncertain, 29 June 2026, url
[83] Asharq Al-Awsat, Iraq Seizes Millions of Dollars at Deputy Oil Minister's Home, 1 July 2026, url
[84] US Department of Treasury, Economic Fury Targets Iraqi Oil Official, Iran-Backed Terrorist Militias in Iraq, 7 May 2026, url

arrests could deepen political tensions, as corruption investigations in Iraq often overlap with rivalries and competition for influence. [85]

1.2. Recent legislation impacting civil and human rights: January 2025 legislative package and its implementation

On 21 January 2025, the Iraqi Parliament passed three 'controversial' laws in a single legislative package, the outcome of political negotiations among various parliamentary blocs,[86] with each law supported by different religious and ethnic groups.[87]

1.2.1. Amendment on Personal Status Law and implementation of the *Ja'afari* Personal Status Code

(a) Adoption to the Personal Status Law and implementation of the *Ja'afari* Personal Status Code

For decades, the Iraq's Personal Status Law No. 188 of 1959 (PSL) provided a unified legal framework governing marriage, divorce, child custody, inheritance and other family matters for all Muslims in the country. [88] Non-Muslims were exempted from the application of the PSL by virtue of special laws, [89] under which the laws of their respective religious communities regulated matters such as marriage and the dissolution of the marital relationship.[90] Although widely regarded as imperfect, the PSL applied uniformly across sects and established a common set of legal protections, particularly for women.[91]

In August 2024, Parliament began considering amendments to the PSL,[92] the principal legal framework governing family matters in Iraq.[93] Backed by the Shiite Coordination Framework, [94] the amendments grant Sunni and Shia religious councils the authority to develop their own

[85] AP News, Iraqi officials, including lawmakers, arrested on corruption charges in overnight raid, 28 June 2026, url
[86] Jummar Media, Three laws in one basket. Iraq insists on division and regression, 27 February 2025, url; Martini L.S., The Square Centre, From Personal Status to General Amnesty: A Controversial Political Process in Iraq, 12 March 2025, url
[87] EPIC, ISHM: January 16 – 23, 2025, 23 January 2025, url; Martini L.S., The Square Centre, From Personal Status to General Amnesty: A Controversial Political Process in Iraq, 12 March 2025, url
[88] Equality Now, Iraq's family laws are being rewritten, women and girls are paying the price, 6 February 2026, url
[89] Art. 2 (1) reads as follows: 'The provisions of this Law shall apply to all Iraqis unless (they have been) exempted by a special law.' Iraq, Iraq: Personal Status Law and Its Amendments (1959), url, art.2 (1)
[90] Iraq, "Combined fourth, fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by Iraq under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women" (CEDAW/C/IRQ/4-6), url, para 19
[91] Equality Now, Iraq's family laws are being rewritten, women and girls are paying the price, 6 February 2026, url
[92] HRW, Iraq: Parliament Poised to Legalize Child Marriage, 16 August 2024, url
[93] UNSG, Report of the Secretary-General, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), S/2025/323, 30 May 2025, url, para. 49
[94] Jummar Media, Three laws in one basket. Iraq insists on division and regression, 27 February 2025, url

'code of Sharia rulings' on matters related to personal status,[95] allowing religious authorities to develop sect-specific personal status codes (*mudawanat*) governing personal status matters.[96] In their final form, however, the amendments primarily provided Shia Muslims with the option of having their family matters governed by the *Jaʿfari* school of Islamic jurisprudence,[97] while Sunni Muslims remained subject to the 1959 PSL.[98] Sunni religious authorities did not, in fact, draft a separate personal status code.[99]

The amendments, enacted as Law No. 1 of 2025, amending the Personal Status Law n. 188 of 1959,[100] entered into force on 18 February 2025.[101] They provided for the development of a *Jaʿafari* Personal Status Code[102] to be drafted by the Shia Endowment Office.[103] On 27 August 2025, the Council of Representatives approved the *Jaʿafari* Personal Status Code (PSC), which had been drafted pursuant to the January 2025 amendments.[104] The Code was subsequently formally ratified by the Decision No. 10 of 2025, which provided that it would constitute an annex to Law No. 1 of 2025.[105] The Decision and the Code were published in the Official Gazette on 6 October 2025[106] and entered into force on the same date. [107] The Code established, for the first time, a separate personal status framework for Shia Muslims alongside the existing 1959 Personal Status Law. [108]

[95] The International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Iraq's Legal Crisis Through the Lens of Its Personal Status Law, 22 May 2025, url
[96] The International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Iraq's Legal Crisis Through the Lens of Its Personal Status Law, 22 May 2025, url; HRW, Iraq: Parliament Poised to Legalize Child Marriage, 16 August 2024, url
[97] HRW, Iraq: Personal Status Law Amendment Sets Back Women's Rights, 10 March 2025, url; LOC, Iraq: House of Representatives Approves Amendments to Law on Personal Status, 14 February 2025, url
[98] Martini L.S., The Square Centre, From Personal Status to General Amnesty: A Controversial Political Process in Iraq, 12 March 2025, url
[99] Martini L.S., The Square Centre, From Personal Status to General Amnesty: A Controversial Political Process in Iraq, 12 March 2025, url
[100] H. Al-Dabbagh i, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[101] HRW, Iraq: Personal Status Law Amendment Sets Back Women's Rights, 10 March 2025, url
[102] ILO, NATLEX, 'Decision No. (10) of 2025 concerning the ratification of (the Codification of Sharia Rulings on Matters of Personal Status according to the Jaʿfari Shiite School of Thought), which shall be deemed an annex to Law No. (1) of 2025, the Law Amending the Personal Status Law No. (188) of 1959', url
[103] The Shi'a Endowment Office (*Diwan al-Waqf al-Shi'i*) is an Iraqi state institution responsible for administering and organising Shi'a religious endowments and overseeing associated religious institutions and sacred sites. It operates as one of Iraq's three endowment offices established following the dissolution of the former Ministry of Endowments and is affiliated with the Council of Ministers, Cambridge University Press, State and Religion in Iraq: The Sufi Insurgency of the Former Baʿth Regime in Historical Conte, 24 August 2023, url; Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Religious Authority and the Politics of Islamic Endowments in Iraq, 1 March 2019, url, p. 1; UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para. 64; HRW, Iraq: New Personal StatusCode Makes Women Second Class, 15 October 2025, url; Shafaq News, Iraq passes code on Shia personal status, 27 August 2025, url
[104] UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para 64; HRW, Iraq: New Personal Status Code Makes Women Second Class, 15 October 2025, url; Shafaq News, Iraq passes code on Shia personal status, 27 August 2025, url
[105] ILO, NATLEX, 'Decision No. (10) of 2025 concerning the ratification of (the Codification of Sharia Rulings on Matters of Personal Status according to the Jaʿfari Shiite School of Thought), which shall be deemed an annex to Law No. (1) of 2025, the Law Amending the Personal Status Law No. (188) of 1959', url
[106] Iraq, Ministry of Justice, Decree No. (10) of 2025 on the ratification of the (Code of Shari'a Provisions in Personal Status Matters according to the Ja'fari Shiite Sect) and is an addendum to Law No. (1) of 2025 on the Law Amending the Personal Status Law No. (188) of 1959, url
[107] GCHR, GCHR's 36th Periodic Report on Human Rights Violations in Iraq, 27 October 2025, url
[108] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 25 February 2026, url, para 29 (d); Equality Now, Iraq's family laws are being rewritten, women and girls are paying the price, 6 February 2026, url; Wadi, Iraq's family laws are being rewritten, women and girls are paying the price, 3 March 2026, url

Couples marrying after the law's entry into force are required to declare their sect when registering their marriage[109] and, if they are Shia, choose whether their family matters will be governed by the 1959 Personal Status Law or the *Ja'afari* Code.[110] Once made, this choice cannot subsequently be changed.[111] The 2025 amendments therefore fragmented the previously unified legal framework governing Personal Status according to sectarian affiliation.[112] According to an Iraqi researcher interviewed by EUAA who preferred to remain anonymous, Shia couples who choose to register their marriage contract under the *Ja'afari* Code may also choose the *Marja',* meaning the Shia clerical authority they follow. The source considered that this arrangement creates scope for differing interpretations and applications of the Code, as different *Maraji'* and other Shia religious authorities may hold divergent jurisprudential interpretations.[113]The 2025 Amendments are in force throughout all governorates under federal jurisdiction, but not in the KRI. The implementation of the *Ja'afari* Code in the KRI would require approval by the Regional Parliament or the adoption of specific regional legislation. Since neither the KRG nor the Kurdistan Parliament has approved the *Ja'afari* Code, it does not apply to the region's population, including those who follow the *Ja'afari* school of jurisprudence. Consequently, the 1959 PSC (as amended by the regional authorities) remains the applicable law for all Muslims subject to the jurisdiction of the KRI courts.[114] Since its entry into force, there are no separate official statistics on the number of marriage contracts concluded under the *Ja'afari* Code. The Supreme Judicial Council publishes monthly figures for the total number of marriage contracts registered in Iraq (excluding the KRI). These statistics include all registered marriages, whether concluded under the PSC or the *Ja'afari* Code.[115] As a result, the extent to which the *Ja ʿfari* Code is used in practice cannot currently be established. This is also linked to the relatively recent introduction of the Code. [116]

(b) Judicial interpretation and applicability to existing marriages

The right to be governed by the new framework applies to both new marriages and existing or dissolved marriages. The applicable legal framework for an existing marriage in cases of dispute subsequently became a major point of controversy.[117] Prof. Al-Dabbagh, a law professor specialised in Islamic law, maintained that, in principle, the beneficiaries of the new legal framework are Iraqi Muslims who follow the *Ja'afari* school of jurisprudence (members of the Shia community). However, the text goes further by allowing any Muslim spouses (including Sunnis) to choose, either at the time of marriage or subsequently, to be governed

[109] Watan, News Iraq's Personal Status Law Sparks Controversy, 23 January 2025, url; HRW, Iraq: Personal Status Law Amendment Sets Back Women's Rights, 10 March 2025, url
[110] HRW, Iraq: Personal Status Law Amendment Sets Back Women's Rights, 10 March 2025, url; LOC, Iraq: House of Representatives Approves Amendments to Law on Personal Status, 14 February 2025, url
[111] Middle East Eye, Iraq: Revised 'sectarian' law that raised fears over child marriage passed without vote, 21 January 2025, url; Brookings, Iraq considers drastic changes to family law, 16 August 2024, url; HRW, Iraq: Personal Status Law Amendment Sets Back Women's Rights, 10 March 2025, url
[112] Wadi, Iraq's family laws are being rewritten, women and girls are paying the price, 3 March 2026, url
[113] Anonymous source, online interview, 30 June 2026
[114] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[115] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[116] Anonymous source, online interview, 30 June 2026
[117] H. Al-Dabbagh, interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026

by the provisions of the *Ja'afari* school. To settle this issue, the Court of Cassation held that the new regime does not apply to Sunnis, who remain subject to the 1959 PSL.[118]

Prof. Al-Dabbagh further observed that, in practice, however, determining whether a person falls within the *Ja'afari* personal status regime may be difficult as Iraqi identity cards do not specify citizens' religious affiliation (*madhhab*), and this information is not normally indicated on older marriage certificates issued by the courts. According to Law No. 1 of 2025, affiliation with the *Ja'afari* rite may be inferred from the dower clause (*mahr*) contained in the marriage certificate. For Sunnis, the deferred *mahr* is usually payable upon the earlier of two events: divorce or the husband's death. Among Shi'is, by contrast, it is payable 'upon request and solvency.' If the marriage certificate contains this latter formula, the spouses automatically become eligible for the application of the alternative regime. However, this wording is not conclusive, since the parties may use either formula interchangeably or adopt different wording, such as making the deferred *mahr* payable on a specified date or upon the occurrence of a particular event. This creates significant practical difficulties in determining which legal framework applies. In the case law, some wives have challenged such claims by asserting that they are Sunnis.[119]

As noted by the same source, as Iraqi personal status law has become more fragmented than ever, the question of interfaith marriages arises even more acutely. The issue of which law applies in such cases remains unsettled by the time of writing this report. [120]

The Code contains provisions allowing a husband to request that an existing marriage previously governed by the PSL be brought under the *Ja'afari* Code without the wife's consent and permits unilateral divorce by the husband.[121] Initially, some lower courts ruled that the consent of both spouses was required to convert an existing marriage to the new *Ja'afari* regime and that a unilateral choice could not modify an already existing marriage contract without the agreement of the other party.[122]

However, in a landmark decision dated 27 November 2025, the Court of Cassation held that the legislator's intention was to establish an individual right for each spouse. Accordingly, the unilateral choice made by either the husband or the wife to apply the Shari'a provisions of the *Ja'afari* school of jurisprudence is valid, regardless of the other spouse's consent.[123] Nevertheless, according to Prof. Al-Dabbagh, this interpretation appears in practice to favour men, as, by the date of his interview with EUAA, he had not identified any case in which such an application had been filed by a woman. The husband may submit the request by a simple declaration (*hujja*), even without the wife's knowledge and her opposition has no legal effect whatsoever. Everything that had previously been agreed upon 'may change overnight'. Prof. Dabbagh considers this interpretation highly questionable, arguing that it undermines legal

[118] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[119] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[120] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[121] HRW, Iraq: New Personal Status Code Makes Women Second Class, 15 October 2025, url; Anonymous source, online interview with EUAA, 30 June 2026
[122] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[123] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026

certainty and the stability of legal relationships and is contrary to the parties' legitimate expectations.[124]

Some sources also cited accounts of women that were previously married and divorced under the former Personal Status Law claiming that their ex-husbands petitioned to retroactively apply the Shia personal status code relating to their children's custody issues.[125]

(c) Role of religious authorities and implementation by the courts

Transferring personal status litigation from religious authorities to civil courts was one of the major reforms introduced by the 1959 PSL.[126] The new framework significantly expands the role of religious authorities in family law.[127]

Although state courts remain responsible for applying *Ja'afari* law, the *Ja'afari* Code provides for recourse to religious authorities on numerous occasions. Regarding matters not expressly addressed by the Code, judges are required to refer to the Shia Endowment Office and apply its opinions when deciding cases. In addition, several provisions require judges to obtain the approval of the Supreme Religious Authority in Najaf (*al-Marji' al-A'la*) before issuing judgments, particularly in matters relating to divorce and inheritance. Case law shows that the courts apply these requirements strictly and follow the opinions expressed by the religious authorities without questioning them.[128] As prof. Al-Dabbagh noted, this shift weakens the judiciary and reduces the discretionary power granted to judges under the PSC.[129] Unlike civil judges, religious authorities conducting marriages are reportedly not subject to the same obligations regarding documentation, registration and judicial oversight.[130] An Iraqi scholar interviewed by EUAA further explained that the websites and social-media channels of individual *Maraji'* have become relevant to the interpretation of the Code. Some *Maraji'* operate official websites through which individuals can submit questions and receive religious rulings, while some clerics maintain official YouTube, Instagram and Facebook accounts. Such rulings may be perceived as authoritative interpretations of the Code, particularly where content appears to originate from the office of a *Marja'*. Nevertheless, the same source noted that it can be difficult to verify whether particular social-media accounts or videos are officially affiliated with a religious authority.[131] The interviewee further observed an apparent difference between the availability of safeguards in English-language and Arabic-language social-media searches. By way of example, the interviewee stated that searches in English for terms relating to child or early marriage may trigger warnings or information concerning the illegality of child marriage, whereas comparable searches in Arabic may not produce equivalent

[124] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[125] HRW, Iraq: New Personal Status Code Makes Women Second Class, 15 October 2025, url; Kurdistan 24, Controversy Over Iraq's Personal Status Law Continue Sparking Debate on Child Custody and Women's Rights, 13 October 2025, url; JINHA, Women protest in Baghdad against amending the Personal Status Law, 20 September 2025, url
[126] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[127] GCHR, GCHR's 36th Periodic Report on Human Rights Violations in Iraq, 27 October 2025, url
[128] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[129] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[130] S. Sanbar, Marriage Without Safeguards: The Consequences of Iraq's Personal Status Code in Jummar, 24 February 2026, url
[131] Anonymous source, online interview with EUAA, 30 June 2026

warnings. This observation relates specifically to social-media platforms rather than official institutional websites. [132]

Following the enactment of the law in February 2025, the judiciary began implementing the amendments 'immediately'[133] and registering marriages under the *Ja'afari* Code.[134] Iraqi courts were reportedly faced with uncertainty in determining whether to apply the unified PSL or sectarian jurisprudence where legal frameworks conflict with one another or with constitutional provisions.[135] This situation may contribute to inconsistent judicial decisions, weaken confidence in the judiciary, and risk creating differentiated treatment rather than uniform justice.[136]

(d) Impact of the *Ja'afari* Personal Status Code on women

The amendments generated considerable debate among political actors, constitutional experts and civil society organisations regarding their implications for women's rights, judicial unity and equality before the law.[137] Some analysts described the reforms as the outcome of political bargaining among sectarian actors rather than a broader legislative reform process, arguing that they reflected power-sharing dynamics within Iraq's political system. [138]

The Code attracted criticism from legal experts, women's rights organisations and civil society groups,[139] particularly regarding their compatibility with Iraq's international human rights obligations.[140] Furthermore, critics argued that the amendments to the PSL may reduce protections for women and children relating to divorce, child custody, inheritance, maintenance, temporary and unregistered marriages, and polygamy.[141] Some constitutional experts further maintained that the reforms may be inconsistent with Articles 14 and 88 of the Iraqi Constitution, concerning equality before the law and judicial independence,[142] as they make the application of personal status law dependent on religious affiliation rather than citizenship.[143] The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW

[132] Anonymous source, online interview, 30 June 2026
[133] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[134] Anonymous source, online interview with EUAA, 30 June 2026
[135] HRW, Iraq: New Personal Status Code Makes Women Second Class, 15 October 2025, url
[136] Al Habib A., From citizens to sects: The implications of Jaafari Code on Iraq in Jummar, 17 October 2025, url
[137] UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para 64 ; Wadi, Iraq's family laws are being rewritten, women and girls are paying the price, 3 March 2026, url; Jummar, Marriage Without Safeguards: The Consequences of Iraq's Personal Status Code, Sarah Sanbar, 24 February 2026, url; GCHR, GCHR's 36th Periodic Report on Human Rights Violations in Iraq, 27 October 2025, url
[138] Jummar Media, From citizens to sects: The implications of Jaafari Code on Iraq, 17 October 2025, url
[139] GCHR, GCHR's 36th Periodic Report on Human Rights Violations in Iraq, 27 October 2025, url; CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 20 May 2026, url, para 55 (a), (b), (c), (d), €; HRW, Iraq: Personal Status Law Amendment Sets Back Women's Rights, 10 March 2025, url
[140] UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para. 64
[141] UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para. 64; CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 25 February 2026, url, para 29 (d); Wadi, Iraq's family laws are being rewritten, women and girls are paying the price, 3 March 2026, url
[142] GCHR, GCHR's 36th Periodic Report on Human Rights Violations in Iraq, 27 October 2025, url
[143] UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para. 64;
Equality Now, Iraq's family laws are being rewritten, women and girls are paying the price, 6 February 2026, url; Al Habib A., From citizens to sects: The implications of Jaafari Code on Iraq in Jummar, 17 October 2025, url

Committee) similarly expressed concern that the *Ja'afari* Personal Status Code and the 2025 amendments could institutionalise discrimination against women, expand sectarian legal frameworks, weaken judicial safeguards and increase the risk of discrimination based on religion or identity.[144] Human Rights Watch reported that the Code favours men in matters relating to marriage, divorce, inheritance and child custody.[145]

Under the *Ja'afari* Code, an adult virgin woman requires her father's or paternal grandfather's consent to marry. Her marriage is void in the absence of such consent. The Code also limits the grounds on which a wife may obtain judicial dissolution of marriage. A judge may grant divorce on the basis of failure to provide financial maintenance (*nafaqa*) following a judicial injunction, complete abandonment of the wife, or sustained assault or beating 'without justification'. In these circumstances, the court also requires the approval of the supreme religious authority (*Marji*).[146]

The economic security available to women following separation is also altered. A divorced woman has no right to maintenance beyond the waiting period (*iddah*), usually 3 months, and no maintenance is payable to a disobedient wife. Under the PSL, maintenance is payable for one year even where the wife is considered disobedient. In addition, under the *Mudawana*, a woman who is the victim of an arbitrary repudiation by her husband can no longer obtain compensation for the harm suffered. Previously, she could be entitled to compensation assessed as a lump sum of up to two years' alimony.[147]

Women also lost access to certain housing protections available under the PSL. Previously, a divorced woman could generally be permitted by the court to remain in the family residence owned or rented by her former husband for up to three years without charge. The new framework also strengthens the husband's marital authority by allowing him to prevent his wife from leaving the house to work or study unless this was stipulated in the marriage contract.[148]

The inheritance rights of widows are also affected. A widow subject to the *Mudawana* cannot inherit her late husband's land and real estate and may inherit only movable property.[149] The amendments also maintained the existing provisions of the PSL concerning polygamy.[150]

(e) Impact of the *Ja'afari* Personal Status Code on children and child custody

Based on the information provided by Prof. Al-Dabbagh, according to the Court of Cassation ruling of 27 November 2025, the option to subject a marriage to the new regime is comprehensive and applies not only to the husband and wife but also to their minor children. Once registered, this choice is enforceable regardless of whether the marriage is still subsisting

[144] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 20 May 2026, para 29 (d)
[145] HRW, Iraq: New Personal Status Code Makes Women Second Class, 15 October 2025, url
[146] H. Al-Dabbagh , Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[147] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[148] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[149] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[150] Art 3(4) reads as follows: 'Marrying more than one woman is not allowed except with the authorization of the qadi (judge). Granting this authorization is dependant on the fulfillment of the following two conditions: a- The husband should have the financial capacity to provide for more than one wife, b- There is a legitimate interest. Iraq: Personal Status Law and Its Amendments (1959), url, Art 3(4); HRW, Iraq: Personal Status Law Amendment Sets Back Women's Rights, 10 March 2025, url

at the time the choice is made or has already ended for any reason whatsoever. As a result, a child's legal status may be affected by disputes between the parents, particularly since the *Mudawana* is silent on the principle of the best interests of the child. [151]

Under the Code a child, upon reaching puberty, may choose whether to live with the father, the mother, or a third party. However, it does not define the age of puberty. According to the Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh)*, puberty is determined by the onset of menstruation for girls and by the appearance of pubic hair or the occurrence of nocturnal emissions for boys. Current case law suggests that children may be required to undergo a medical examination in order to establish whether they have reached puberty and eligible to make a choice. This has raised concerns regarding the potentially intrusive and traumatic nature of such examinations.[152]

Under the 1959 PSL, the mother has priority in the custody of her children until the age of ten,[153] with the court able to extend custody until the age of 15 where this is considered to be in the child's best interests.[154] At the age of 15, the child may choose which parent or relative to live with, subject to the court's assessment, until the age of 18.[155] Furthermore, a mother's right to custody is not affected by remarriage.[156] Under the new *Ja'afari* Personal Status Code, custody automatically shifts to the father after the child reaches the age of seven.[157] In some cases Shia clerics have previously granted fathers custody from the age of two[158] and automatically in case where the mother remarries,[159] while also dismissing the need to provide child support.[160] A divorced woman who had obtained a child support or custody order under the PSC may retrospectively become subject to the new law and be deprived of those rights under the Code.[161] According to reporting cited by US-based civil society organisation Enabling Peace in Iraq Centre (EPIC), approximately 4 400 mothers had reportedly lost custody of their children by October 2025 following the implementation of the Code, [162] while

[151] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[152] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[153] Allam, N. and Al Qaraghuli, B., The Politics of Personal Status Law in Egypt and Iraq, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 2025, url, p. 12; Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Amendment to Personal Status Law: A Blow to Iraqi Women & Society, 22 August 2024, url; Brookings, Iraq considers drastic changes to family law, 16 August 2024, url
[154] Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Amendment to Personal Status Law: A Blow to Iraqi Women & Society, 22 August 2024, url
[155] Ali H., How Legal Reforms in Iraq's Personal Status Law Institutionalise Sectarianism and Threaten Women's Rights, 11 October 2024, EISMENA, url
[156] NRC, Legal guide to child's rights in Iraq, November 2024, url, p. 24; Ali H., How Legal Reforms in Iraq's Personal Status Law Institutionalise Sectarianism and Threaten Women's Rights, 11 October 2024, EISMENA, url
[157] Allam, N. and Al Qaraghuli, B., The Politics of Personal Status Law in Egypt and Iraq, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 2025, url, p. 12; HRW, Iraq: New Personal Status Code Makes Women Second Class, 15 October 2025, url; Anonymous source, online interview with EUAA, 30 June 2026
[158] Allam, N. and Al Qaraghuli, B., The Politics of Personal Status Law in Egypt and Iraq, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 2025, url, p. 12; HRW, Iraq: New Personal Status Code Makes Women Second Class, 15 October 2025, url
[159] Ali H., How Legal Reforms in Iraq's Personal Status Law Institutionalise Sectarianism and Threaten Women's Rights, 11 October 2024, EISMENA, url; Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Amendment to Personal Status Law: A Blow to Iraqi Women & Society, 22 August 2024, url
[160] Allam, N. and Al Qaraghuli, B., The Politics of Personal Status Law in Egypt and Iraq, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 2025, url, p. 12; Brookings, Iraq considers drastic changes to family law, 16 August 2024, url
[161] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[162] EPIC, ISHM: October 2 – 9, 2025, 9 October 2025, url

around 800 women had reportedly relocated to the KRI to avoid losing custody.[163] Other women and couples in Federal Iraq have reportedly considered relocating to the KRI due to concerns about the Code's implications for child custody, although the scale of such movements remains unclear, and the extent to which the KRI's legal framework can provide effective safeguards in individual cases has not been established. Despite the Code's non-applicability in the KRI, persons residing there could potentially travel to Federal Iraq, including Baghdad or Najaf, to conclude or register a marriage under the Code.[164]

(f) Impact of the *Ja'afari* Personal Status Code on child marriage

The final text of the personal status codes stipulates that the minimum age of marriage under the *Mudawana* must conform with the Personal Status Law of 1959,[165] which sets the legal age for marriage at 18, or at 15 with judicial authorisation based on the child's 'maturity and physical capacity'.[166] The *Ja'afari* Code therefore does not formally lower the statutory minimum age of marriage. Nevertheless, the amendments continue to raise concerns regarding the rights of Iraqi women and children, particularly in relation, inter alia, to temporary and unregistered marriages.[167] Unlike the 1959 PSL, the *Ja'afar*i Code does not prescribe a specific minimum age of marriage. Instead, it contains provisions referring to concepts such as maturity (*rushd*) and puberty (*bulugh*). In the absence of a specified age, the relevant standard may therefore be linked to the onset of puberty. According to some religious interpretations, a girl may be considered marriageable from the onset of puberty, which the Iraqi researcher interviewed by the EUAA associated with the age of nine in certain interpretations. However, a distinction should be made between a religious marriage contract concluded according to such an interpretation and its subsequent registration with the state. According to the interviewed source, where a family seeks to conclude a marriage involving an underage person through a cleric, a religious marriage contract may potentially be created even where its registration by the Ministry of Justice would raise legal difficulties because of the statutory minimum age. The same source further noted that it is believed that marriages of underage girls will likely unofficially continue or will be registered upon reaching the legal age[168] (see section 1.7.5 on Child marriage). No official statistics are available on either unregistered marriages or child marriages although sources cited by Prof. Al-Dabbagh report that such marriages may account for more than 20 % of all marriages.[169] By granting clerics the authority to conduct marriages, the law raised women's organisations concerns over the potential legalisation of the so-called pleasure marriages.[170]

[163] EPIC, ISHM: October 2 – 9, 2025, 9 October 2025, url
[164] Anonymous source, online interview, 30 June 2026; HRW, Marriage Without Safeguards: The Consequences of Iraq's Personal Status Code, 24 February 2026, url
[165] The International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Iraq's Legal Crisis Through the Lens of Its Personal Status Law, 22 May 2025, url; HRW, Iraq: Personal Status Law Amendment Sets Back Women's Rights, 10 March 2025, url; UNSG, Report of the Secretary-General, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), 30 May 2025, url, para. 49
[166] HRW, Iraq: Personal Status Law Amendment Sets Back Women's Rights, 10 March 2025, url; UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para. 64
[167] UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para. 64; Martini L.S., The Square Centre, From Personal Status to General Amnesty: A Controversial Political Process in Iraq, 12 March 2025, url;
[168] Anonymous source, online interview, 30 June 2026; NLM, The Child Brides of Iraq, 16 July 2025, url
[169] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[170] HRW, Iraq: Personal Status Law Amendment Sets Back Women's Rights, 10 March 2025, url

(g) Impact of the *Ja'afari* Personal Status Code on unregistered marriages

Under the *Ja'afari* Code, marriages may be concluded verbally without formal registration, raising concerns regarding legal certainty, access to civil documentation, and the protection of women's and children's rights.[171] Women's rights organisations and media reports further expressed concern that these provisions may facilitate unregistered and temporary ('pleasure') marriages and increase the risk of child marriage.[172] Religious marriages may be concluded without immediate state registration, with some families delaying registration until the legal minimum age is reached.[173] In the days following the enactment of the new law in February 2025, thousands of applications were reportedly submitted to bring existing marriages under the new regime. However, no separate official statistics are available on the number of marriage contracts concluded under the *Ja'afari* Code.[174]

1.2.2. The Property Restitution Law

The Property Restitution Law mandates the return of approximately 300 000 dunams (300 square kilometres) of land[175] confiscated during the Baath regime to their original owners 'within two months' from March 2025.[176] The law primarily address longstanding claims by Kurdish landowners and, to a lesser extent, other minorities, such as Turkmen, who were dispossessed under Saddam Hussein's rule.[177] Although the law does not explicitly mention specific groups or regions, its implementation has focused largely on disputed areas like Kirkuk, a zone of particular concern for Kurdish claims,[178] where competing ownership claims remain closely linked to the unresolved implementation of Article 140 (on disputed territories)[179] of the Iraqi Constitution.[180] The implementation of the law has remained incomplete and politically contested, particularly in Kirkuk and other disputed territories, contributing to continuing disputes over agricultural land and ownership.[181]

A February 2026 report published by the Kurdistan Regional Government's Department of Media and Information stated that the continued non-implementation of Article 140 has

[171] Sanbar S., Marriage Without Safeguards: The Consequences of Iraq's Personal Status Code in Jummar, 24 February 2026, url
[172] HRW, Iraq: Personal Status Law Amendment Sets Back Women's Rights, 10 March 2025, url; Kurdistan 24, Controversy Over Iraq's Personal Status Law Continue Sparking Debate on Child Custody and Women's Rights, 13 October 2025, url
[173] Anonymous source, online interview, 30 June 2026
[174] H. Al-Dabbagh, Interview with EUAA, 22 July 2026
[175] Kurdistan24, Iraq Enacts Landmark Property Restitution Law as Tensions Rise in Kirkuk, 18 February 2025, url
[176] Rudaw, Iraq to begin implementing land return law 'within two months:' Minister, 31 March 2025, url
[177] Amwaj, Parliamentary 'horse-trading' over divisive laws sparks backlash in Iraq, 29 January 2025, url; Shafaq News, Hopes for property returns, calls for nationwide inclusion in Restitution Law, 25 January 2025, url; Jummar Media, Three laws in one basket. Iraq insists on division and regression, 27 February 2025, url
[178] Amwaj, Parliamentary 'horse-trading' over divisive laws sparks backlash in Iraq, 29 January 2025, url
[179] Article 140 was introduced as an extension of Article 58 of the Iraqi Transitional Administrative Law to resolve the issue of disputed territories in Iraq. Its implementation was designed to proceed in three stages: normalisation, a population census and a referendum to determine the will of their residents. The process was to be completed by 31 December 2007 but remains unresolved. Brookings, The constitutional context for Iraq's latest crisis, 7 November 2017, url; ICG, Reviving UN Mediation on Iraq's Disputed Internal Boundaries, 14 December 2018, url, p. 2
[180] Rudaw, Kirkuk agriculture halts land contract renewals, returns to original owners, 27 February 2026, url; Shafaq, Iraq's Diyala boundary changes challenge Article 140 framework, 22 February 2026, url
[181] KirkukNow, Kirkuk: Ownership of Lands Further Complicated by Digging Wells, 09 September 2025, url

contributed to persistent land and property disputes in the disputed territories.[182] According to the report, the reactivation of Ba'ath-era agricultural contracts, unresolved restitution claims and recent administrative decisions in Kirkuk indicate that property restitution remains incomplete.[183] Local media reporting similarly described continued delays in implementing the Property Restitution Law and Article 140, as well as continuing disputes over agricultural land, administrative decisions affecting ownership claims, and tensions between Kurdish landowners and Arab residents.[184] The narrow application of restitution measures also generated concerns among other communities, particularly in central and southern Iraq, whose confiscated lands were reportedly not addressed, raising concerns about unequal restitution and the potential for further intercommunal tensions.[185]

Land disputes between Arab residents and Kurdish landowners persisted in Kirkuk during the reporting period. Lawsuits were filed seeking to reclaim more than 170 dunams (170 000 square meters) of farmland from Kurdish farmers despite existing court decisions recognising Kurdish ownership.[186] In September 2025, a court in Kirkuk sentenced a Kurdish farmer to four months' imprisonment in connection with a land dispute involving an Arab residents, while local representatives reported that several other Kurdish farmers faced criminal proceedings arising from similar dispute.[187] Unidentified armed men reportedly ambushed two Kurdish farmers near the subdistrict of Prde (Altun Kupri), injuring one and reportedly abducting the other. According to local authorities, Iraqi security forces subsequently exchanged fire with the unidentified gunmen, resulting in injuries to two Iraqi soldiers.[188]

In December 2025, the appointment of a new Director of Agriculture in Kirkuk prompted further controversy after Kurdish and Turkmen farmers alleged that the department had renewed approximately 70 agricultural contracts granted to Arab residents on land subject to restitution claims.[189] During the same period, Kurdish farmers reported that Iraqi security forces (ISF) prevented them from harvesting crops on disputed land, while other reports referred to attacks by unidentified armed men targeting Kurdish farmers.[190] These incidents occurred against the backdrop of continuing delays in implementing the Property Restitution Law and Article 140, leaving ownership disputes unresolved.[191] Concerns over demographic change remained closely connected to these unresolved property disputes. In July 2026 residents of

[182] Article 140 was introduced as an extension of Article 58 of the Iraqi Transitional Administrative Law to resolve the issue of disputed territories in Iraq. Its implementation was designed to proceed in three stages, with completion scheduled not later than 31 December 2007. Brookings, The constitutional context for Iraq's latest crisis, 7 November 2017, url
[183] KRG, After two decades, Article 140 remains unfulfilled amid new administrative and agricultural measures, 23 February 2026, url
[184] Rudaw, Kirkuk agriculture halts land contract renewals, returns to original owners, 27 February 2026, url; Shafaq, Iraq's Diyala boundary changes challenge Article 140 framework, 22 February 2026, url
[185] Bas News, Iraqi Army Blocks Kurdish Farmers From Cultivating Land in Kirkuk, 16 February 2025, url; Kurdistan24, Kurdish farmers stand firm amid tensions with Iraqi army in Kirkuk, 17 February 2025, url; Martini L.S., The Square Centre, From Personal Status to General Amnesty: A Controversial Political Process in Iraq, 12 March 2025, url
[186] Rudaw, Land disputes between Kurdish farmers, Arab residents resurface in Kirkuk, 2 February 2026, url
[187] Rudaw, Kirkuk court sentences Kurdish farmer to prison amid ongoing land dispute, 22 September 2025, url
[188] Rudaw, Unidentified gunmen attack Kurdish farmers in Kirkuk, 19 September 2025, url
[189] Rudaw, Kirkuk farmers concerned about new agricultural official's appointment, 26 December 2025, url
[190] Rudaw, Iraqi army blocks farmers from harvesting in Kirkuk village, 6 December 2025, url
[191] Rudaw, Kurdish farmers in Kirkuk risk losing another season as restitution law stalls, 20 November 2025, url

Kurdish villages in northern Kirkuk established advisory councils to oversee land sales amid concerns over increasing purchases by Arabs from other Iraqi governorates. Community representatives stated that the councils aim to limit sales to outsiders and preserve the area's demographic composition, citing the historical legacy of Arabisation policies implemented during the Ba'ath era.[192]

1.2.3. The General Amnesty Law

The General Amnesty Law provides for the reopening of investigations and criminal proceedings where convictions were reportedly based on confessions obtained under torture, anonymous informant testimony or confessions made by defendants.[193] The law applies to offences committed up to January 2025[194] and extends to convicted persons as well as individuals under investigation or trial, including those sentenced to death,[195] allowing for the review of death sentences.[196] It also expands the list of terrorism-related offences excluded from amnesty, including crimes involving incitement, assistance, or recruitment committed before 10 June 2014.[197] The legislation was strongly supported by Sunni political parties, which argued that anti-terrorism legislation had disproportionately affected Sunni communities following the conflict with ISIL.[198] The amendments were also intended to address severe prison overcrowding.[199]

The law generated criticism from several groups. Representatives of the Yazidi community expressed concern that the legislation could allow perpetrators of crimes committed during the genocide against the Yazidis in Sinjar and surrounding areas to avoid accountability through retrials or release[200] (see section 1.3 on Ethnic religious minorities). Other observers raised concerns that the law could be misused in corruption cases.[201] The legislation also remained politically contentious, with Sunni parties supporting it as a corrective measure against alleged wrongful convictions under anti-terrorism legislation, while some Shiite factions expressed concerns that individuals convicted of terrorism-related offences could benefit from retrials.[202]

The implementation of the amended General Amnesty Law began in February 2025. According to the Supreme Judicial Council, more than 9 400 detainees had been released by September 2025.[203] By January 2026, the Council reported that 41 364 individuals had been released from prisons and detention facilities under the amended law, estimating that the

[192] Rudaw, Kurds form councils in Kirkuk to prevent Arabization, 11 July 2026, url
[193] UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024) Report of the Secretary-General, 30 May 2025, url, para. 50
[194] UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024) Report of the Secretary-General, 30 May 2025, url, para. 50
[195] UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024) Report of the Secretary-General, 30 May 2025, url, para. 50
[196] Arab Weekly (The), Iraqi amnesty law could set free terrorism convicts, prisoners who fought Americans, 25 January 2025, url
[197] UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024) Report of the Secretary-General, 30 May 2025, url, para 50;
[198] Al Jazeera, Iraq frees over 19,000 prisoners under new amnesty, including some ex-ISIL, 13 May 2025, url
[199] Arab Weekly (The), Iraqi amnesty law could set free terrorism convicts, prisoners who fought Americans, 25 January 2025, url
[200] Nadia's Initiative, Press Release Issued by the Yazidi Community on Rejecting and Condemning the Passage of a Controversial General Amnesty Law by the Iraqi Parliament, 25 January 2025, url
[201] Amwaji, Parliamentary 'horse-trading' over divisive laws sparks backlash in Iraq, 29 January 2025, url
[202] Shafaq News, "Iraq frees 33,500+ under General Amnesty Law", 2 September 2025, url
[203] Shafaq News, "Iraq's Amnesty Law sets over 9,000 inmates free", 29 September 2025, url

measure had reduced public expenditure by approximately USD 67 million.[204] In March 2026, the Council reported that the number of released detainees had risen to 42 284, while approximately 170 300 convicted persons and suspects had benefited, or were expected to benefit, from the law's provisions.[205] According to the Council, beneficiaries included convicted persons, pre-trial detainees, individuals released on bail, persons convicted *in absentia* and those subject to outstanding arrest warrants. Sources further noted that the implementation of the law generated the collection of fines and restitution payments and was presented by the authorities as a judicial and administrative measure aimed at reducing prison overcrowding, resolving pending criminal cases and facilitating the reintegration of eligible offenders.[206]

1.3. Ethnic and religious minorities

Iraq is a predominantly Muslim country, with the population mainly composed of Shia and Sunni Muslims. Estimates generally indicate that Shia Muslims constitute the majority of the population, while Sunnis form a significant minority, although official figures are not available. Sources indicate that Shia communities are predominantly Arab, with smaller Turkmen and Kurdish populations, while Sunni communities include Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen and other ethnic groups.[207] Iraq is characterised by a diverse religious and sectarian landscape,[208] comprising a range of ethnic and religious groups, including Arabs, Kurds, Turkmens, Assyrians, Yazidis, and other minorities.[209] While this diversity has been described as a cultural asset, it has also been associated with political competition and intercommunal tensions.[210]

Following the fall of Saddam Hussein, Iraq adopted a sectarian power-sharing system commonly referred to as *Muhasasa Ta'ifiyya*,[211] designed to ensure representation of major ethnic and sectarian communities[212] and to help prevent large-scale conflict through power-

[204] Rudaw, Iraq releases over 41,300 inmates under amnesty law: Judiciary, 3 February 2026, url; EPIC, ISHM, ISHM: January 29 – February 5, 2026, 5 February 2026, url
[205] EPIC, ISHM, ISHM: February 26 – March 5, 2026, 5 March 2026, url
[206] Shafaq News, "Iraq frees 33,500+ under General Amnesty Law", 2 September 2025, url; PUKmedia, Iraqi Supreme Judicial Council: Over 33,000 Released Under Amended Amnesty Law, 2 September 2025, url
[207] Encyclopaedia Britannica, Arabs of Iraq, 1 June 2026, url
[208] Sabah Al-Kuraiti, F. A., et al., Civil and Political Rights of Minorities in Iraq After 2003. Interdisciplinary Studies in Society, Law, and Politics, 1 January 2025, url, p. 24; J. Mahor, Sectarianism and ethnic conflict in Iraq: Iran & Iraq Relations post 2003, International Journal of Political Science and Governance 2025; 7(10), 17 October 2025, url, p. 242
[209] Sabah Al-Kuraiti, F. A., et al., Civil and Political Rights of Minorities in Iraq After 2003. Interdisciplinary Studies in Society, Law, and Politics, 1 January 2025, url, p. 24; J. Mahor, Sectarianism and ethnic conflict in Iraq: Iran & Iraq Relations post 2003, International Journal of Political Science and Governance 2025; 7(10), 17 October 2025, url, p. 242
[210] Sabah Al-Kuraiti, F. A., et al., Civil and Political Rights of Minorities in Iraq After 2003. Interdisciplinary Studies in Society, Law, and Politics, 1 January 2025, url, p. 24
[211] *Muhasasa Ta'ifiyya* refers to Iraq's post-2003 sectarian power-sharing system, established following the US-led invasion and regime change. It is described as an elite political arrangement based on ethno-religious consociationalism or sectarian apportionment, in which political representation and state positions are distributed among Iraq's major ethnic and sectarian groups. The system has been justified as a mechanism for managing Iraq's social diversity and elections through guaranteed group representation. T. Dodge, Mansour, R., Sectarianization and desectarianization in the struggle for Iraq's political field, 14 January 2020, url, p. 1; Chatham House, Research Paper, Politically sanctioned corruption and barriers to reform in Iraq, June 2021, url
[212] Shafaq News, Religion in Iraq: Heritage of civilization or a catalyst for conflict?, 18 February 2025, url

sharing arrangements.[213] While effective in the short term, this system reinforced sectarian identities and weakened national unity.[214] Ethnic and religious identities have been politically instrumentalised, contributing to divisions, violence, forced displacement,[215] and reduced social cohesion.[216] Iraq's political system continues to face challenges to its legitimacy, with public perceptions of corruption, ineffective governance and declining trust in state institutions.[217] Moreover, sectarian divisions and the legacy of ISIL's occupation continue to influence Iraq's political and social environment[218] particularly through persistent tensions surrounding the return and reintegration of individuals and families perceived to have links with ISIL.[219] At the political level, the power-sharing arrangement remains entrenched, sustained by established patronage networks and political accommodation among major political actors.[220]

1.3.1. Political representation and participation

A quota system is in place at the federal level to ensure representation of ethnic and religious minorities in the Council of Representatives.[221] Sunni Muslims are not allocated separate reserved seats under this minority quota system.[222] A total of nine seats out of 329 are reserved for minorities, including five for Christians and one each for Fayli Kurds, Yazidis, Sabean Mandeans, and Shabaks.[223] In the KRI, minority political representation was affected by a February 2024 ruling of the Federal Supreme Court, which declared minority quota seats in the Kurdistan Parliament unconstitutional. The ruling abolished the previous system of eleven reserved seats and led to a revised allocation of five minority seats, shared among Christians, Turkmens, Armenians, and other groups.[224] The quota system was subsequently restored by Iraq's judicial authorities, with five minority seats allocated across the three

[213] K. Palani, How Power-Sharing Endures: Generational Change and Institutional Persistence in Iraq, 2026, url, Vol. 32, No. 2, p. 179
[214] National News (The), How the war on Iran is exposing Iraq's fundamental failures, 20 March 2026, url; Shafaq News, Religion in Iraq: Heritage of civilization or a catalyst for conflict?, 18 February 2025, url
[215] Carnegie Endowment, Iraq's Displacement Crisis, 17 October 2024, url; USIP, Minority Rights in Iraq, 3 July 2025, url
[216] IFAD, Country strategy note – Republic of Iraq, 29 December 2024, url, p. 42
[217] K. Palani, How Power-Sharing Endures: Generational Change and Institutional Persistence in Iraq, 2026, url, Vol. 32, No. 2, p. 190
[218] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 5
[219] ICCT, Case Management of Iraqi Adult Returnees in al-Amal: Drawing Lessons from Comparable Contexts, February 2026, url; Anonymous source, interview with EUAA, 26 June 2026
[220] K. Palani, How Power-Sharing Endures: Generational Change and Institutional Persistence in Iraq, 2026, Vol. 32, No. 2, p. 190
[221] Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 – Iraq (covering facts of 2023), 2024, url
[222] UNAMI, Information Package, 2025 Iraq Council of Representatives (COR) elections, 6 November 2025, url, p. 6
[223] UNAMI, Information Package, 2025 Iraq Council of Representatives (COR) elections, 6 November 2025, url, p. 6; Shafaq News, Iraq's 2025 Elections: Minority quota under spotlight, 8 November 2025, url
[224] Rudaw, Iraq's top court rules against Kurdistan Region parliament minority seats, 21 February 2024, url; ECLJ, Iraqi Christians: The Story of a Community Under Pressure, 18 June 2026, url

governorates: two seats in Erbil for Christians and Turkmens, two seats in Sulaymaniyah for Christians and Turkmens, and one seat in Duhok for an Armenian Christian.[225]

Minority representation in the KRI remains limited also due to the dominant influence of major Kurdish political parties, particularly the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). As a result, minority representatives are reported to have limited ability to influence decision-making or advocate effectively for their communities.[226]

According to some representatives of minority organisations, initiatives promoting religious coexistence in Iraq have often focused on interfaith dialogue rather than on structural reforms, while unresolved issues relating to property restitution, political representation, documentation and conversion continue to affect minority communities.[227] An Iraqi scholar with extensive research experience, who preferred to remain anonymous, and who was interviewed by EUAA observed that political participation in Iraq continued to be manipulated by the dominant Shia and Kurdish political parties, leaving minorities without genuine political representation within the political system. Following the November 2025 parliamentary elections and the government-formation process, significant rivalries emerged among Shia and Kurdish parties over quota seats and minority representation, 'rendering quota system meaningless'.[228]

1.3.2. Constitutional and legal framework on religion and minorities

Iraq's constitutional and legal framework reflects both its religious diversity and the role of Islam in public life.[229] The Iraqi Constitution[230] recognises Iraq as a country composed of multiple nationalities, religions and denominations.[231] It guarantees freedom of religion and belief and provides for protection of the religious rights of all individuals specifically recognising Christians, Yazidis, and Mandean Sabeans.[232] At the same time, the Constitution establishes Islam as the official religion of the State[233] and a fundamental source of

[225] +964, Minority parties reject verdict, Iraqi electoral judicial council restores five parliamentary minority seats, 21 May 2024, url
[226] ECLJ, Iraqi Christians: The Story of a Community Under Pressure, 18 June 2026, url
[227] 1001 Iraqi Thoughts, Is Home Safe? Religious Freedom in Iraq and Syria, 10 March 2026, url
[228] Anonymous source, interview with EUAA, 26 June 2026
[229] BTI, BTI 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 6
[230] 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 Mandean Sabeans'. Iraq, Constitution of the Republic of Iraq, 15 October 2005, url, Art. 2 (1), Art. 2 (2)
[231] Article 3 reads: 'Iraq is a country of multiple nationalities, religions, and sects (...)', Iraq, Constitution of the Republic of Iraq, 15 October 2005, url, Art. 3
[232] H. Al-Dabbagh , The Vicissitudes of Personal Status Pluralism in Iraq, in Equality, pluralism and personal status laws, Taylor & Francis, 14 May 2026, url, 2026, p. 378; 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 Mandean Sabeans', Iraq, Constitution of the Republic of Iraq, 15 October 2005, url, Art. 2 (2)
[233] Iraq, Constitution of the Republic of Iraq, 15 October 2005, url, Art. 2 (1); Sabah Al-Kuraiti, F. A., et al., Civil and Political Rights of Minorities in Iraq After 2003. Interdisciplinary Studies in Society, Law, and Politics, 1 January 2025, url, p. 26

legislation,[234] stipulating that no law may contradict the established provisions of Islam.[235] The Iraqi Constitution enshrines the protection of 'the Islamic identity of the majority of the Iraqi people' as a constitutional principle.[236] Article 41 provides that Iraqis may regulate their personal status in accordance with their religion, sect, belief or choice, subject to regulation by law.[237]

In practice, 17 religious groups are recognised under Iraqi law:[238] Muslims, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Assyrian Catholics, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholics, Armenian Apostolics, Armenian Catholics, Roman Catholics, National Protestants, Anglicans, Evangelical Protestant Assyrians, Seventh-day Adventists, Coptic Orthodox, Yazidis, Sabean-Mandeans, and Jews. Recognition allows these groups to appoint legal representatives and conduct legal transactions.[239] All recognised religious groups, except the Yazidis, have personal-status courts responsible for matters including marriage, divorce, and inheritance.[240] The 1959 Personal Status Law remains the principal legal framework governing personal-status matters for Muslims in Iraq.[241] However, following an amendment that entered into force on 18 February 2025,[242] Shia Muslims may choose to be governed either by the 1959 Personal Status Law or by the Shia *Ja'afari* Personal Status Code, [243] which was approved in August 2025 [244] (see section 1.2.1. Amendment on Personal Status Law and *Ja'afari* Personal Status Code). Within the KRI, Kurdistan Region Law No. 5 of 2015 recognises religious and ethnic diversity and provides a legal framework for protecting minority rights, including the rights to religious practice and cultural expression.[245]

Despite the absence of any provision regarding conversion in the Iraqi Penal Code,[246] the National Identity Card Law permits conversion to Islam[247] but does not recognise conversion from Islam to another religion.[248] Children with one Muslim parent are automatically registered

[234] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 8
[235] Gadd, K., Ubeis, F., "I must care about the reputation of my family. This is very important to me": an exploration of factors affecting Iraqi women's access to justice, , 12 April 2025, url, pp. 4-5
[236] H. Al-Dabbagh , The Vicissitudes of Personal Status Pluralism in Iraq, in Equality, pluralism and personal status laws, Taylor & Francis, 14 May 2026, url, p. 378; 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 Mandean Sabeans', Iraq, Constitution of the Republic of Iraq, 15 October 2005, url, Art. 2 (2)
[237] UNESCWA, Country Matrix – Iraq 2024, url, p. 2
[238] H. Al-Dabbagh, The Vicissitudes of Personal Status Pluralism in Iraq, in Equality, pluralism and personal status laws, Taylor & Francis, 14 May 2026, url, pp. 386-387
[239] USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, url, pp. 7-8
[240] USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, url, pp. 7-8
[241] UNSG, Report of the Secretary-General, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), S/2025/323, 30 May 2025, url, para. 49
[242] HRW, Iraq: Personal Status Law Amendment Sets Back Women's Rights, 10 March 2025, url
[243] HRW, Iraq: Personal Status Law Amendment Sets Back Women's Rights, 10 March 2025, url; LOC, Iraq: House of Representatives Approves Amendments to Law on Personal Status, 14 February 2025, url
[244] UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para 64; HRW, Iraq: New Personal Status Code Makes Women Second Class, 15 October 2025, url; Shafaq News, Iraq passes code on Shia personal status, 27 August 2025, url
[245] KCIL, Climate Change and Religious Minorities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: The Intersection of Environmental Crisis and Freedom of Religion or Belief, April 2026, url, p. 33
[246] Iraq, Penal Code, No. 111 of 1969, July 1969, url; Open Doors, World Watch List 2025, Iraq, 2025, url
[247] Art 26(1) reads as follows: 'A non-Muslim may change his religion in accordance with the law; Iraq, National Card Law No. (3) of 2016, url, art. 26 (1)); CSI, Beyond ISIS: How long will exodus of Iraq's Christians continue?, 9 December 2025, url
[248] CSI, Beyond ISIS: How long will exodus of Iraq's Christians continue?, 9 December 2025, url

as Muslim.[249] The National Identity Card Law stipulates that if a person converts to Islam, all their children are considered Muslim, including those from earlier marriages.[250] As a result, children cannot subsequently be officially registered as Christians while one parent remains Muslim[251] (see section 1.7 on Children). However, in May 2026, Iraq's Court of Cassation affirmed a ruling allowing a young Christian woman, who had been automatically registered as Muslim following her mother's conversion to Islam, to have her religious status corrected in the government's database after reaching the age of majority.[252] Apostasy cases are adjudicated under Sharia law.[253] No information was found on rulings on apostasy within the time constraints of this report.

Recognition of religious communities also varies. While the Constitution guarantees freedom of religion for recognised groups,[254] some religious communities, including Baha'is, Kaka'is and Zoroastrians, are not recognised at the federal level.[255] The practice of the Baha'i faith remains prohibited under Federal Law No. 105 of 1970,[256] which provides criminal penalties of up to ten years' imprisonment.[257] By contrast, the KRI officially recognises the Baha'i faith.[258]

Iraqi legislation also regulates interfaith marriage differently depending on the religion and gender of the spouses. Under the Personal Status Law, Muslim men may marry Christian women, whereas Muslim women are prohibited from marrying non-Muslim men.[259] In cases where a non-Muslim spouse converts to Islam, Islamic personal status law immediately becomes applicable[260] and minor children are automatically considered Muslim.[261] These provisions reflect the constitutional primacy accorded to Islamic law and may result in the

[249] Iraq, National Card Law No. (3) of 2016, url, art. 26 (2)
[250] Iraq, National Card Law No. (3) of 2016, url, art. 26 (2)
[251] ECJL, Iraqi Christians: The Story of a Community Under Pressure, 18 June 2026, url
[252] ADFI, Iraq's Court of Cassation affirms woman's right to be classified as Christian in state's official database, 30 July 2026, url
[253] USCIRF, Compendium, url, p. 10; Iraq, Personal Status Law and its amendments, Law N° (188) of the year 1959, url
[254] H. Al-Dabbagh, The Vicissitudes of Personal Status Pluralism in Iraq, in Equality, pluralism and personal status laws, Taylor & Francis, 14 May 2026, url, p. 378; 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 Mandean Sabeans', Iraq, Constitution of the Republic of Iraq, 15 October 2005, url, Art. 2 (2)
[255] USDOS, Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 30 June 2024, url, p. 3
[256] Faridoon D., Untold Stories: The Bahá'í Faith in Iraq in: EISMENA, 2 June 2025 url; Jummar Media, The Baha'is in Iraq: From closures of places of worship to negotiations over the constitution, 31 July 2023, url
[257] Jummar Media, The Baha'is in Iraq: From closures of places of worship to negotiations over the constitution, 31 July 2023, url
[258] Open Doors, World Watch List 2025, Iraq, 2025, url, 15 January 2025, p. 8; MRG, Baha'i in Iraq, n.d.,url
[259] Iraq, Personal Status Law and its amendments, Law N° (188) of the year 1959, url, art. 17; Open Doors, World Watch List 2025, Iraq, 2025, url
[260] H. Al-Dabbagh, The Vicissitudes of Personal Status Pluralism in Iraq: A New Tower of Babel? In Equality, Plurality and Personal Status Laws, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 14 May 2026, url, p. 378; Art. 2 reads: 'First: 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, Iraq, Constitution of the Republic of Iraq, 15 October 2005, url, Art. 2 (1).
[261] Open Doors, Iraq: Persecution Dynamics, December 2024, url, pp. 23-24

dissolution of certain interfaith marriages if one spouse converts to Islam while the other does not.[262] Sunni-Shia marriages are permissible under Iraqi law.[263]

Blasphemy remained criminalised under the Penal Code under art. 372[264] and have been used to arrest and intimidate social media users and public figures, prompting concerns among civil society organisations regarding broad judicial discretion and the potential impact on freedom of expression.[265] The enforcement of blasphemy and public morality provisions has also extended to the regulation of online content. In 2025, Iraqi authorities banned the online gaming platform Roblox, citing the presence of blasphemous and sexually explicit content, profanity and concerns over child exploitation, describing the measure as necessary to protect public morals and religious values[266] (see section 1.9 Individuals perceived as transgressing moral and Islamic norms).

1.3.3 Treatment of ethnic and religious minorities

Decades of conflict and violence have weakened Iraq's historical ethnic and religious diversity, particularly affecting ethno-religious minorities.[267] This has led to demographic shifts in areas such as the Ninewa Plains[268] and an overall significant decline in minority populations across Iraq,[269] although reliable data are lacking.[270] In the KRI, minority communities, particularly those living in rural and semi-rural areas, face increasing environmental and climate-related pressures. Environmental degradation and related livelihood pressures may further contribute to rural-to-urban migration and emigration, potentially accelerating the demographic decline of already small and historically rooted minority communities.[271] Conflict-related sexual violence in Iraq remains chronically underreported and is reported to disproportionately affect minority communities, including Shia Turkmen, Shabak and Christian populations.[272]

[262] H. Al-Dabbagh, The Vicissitudes of Personal Status Pluralism in Iraq: A New Tower of Babel? In Equality, Plurality and Personal Status Laws, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 14 May 2026, url, p. 381
[263] Sanbar S., email communication to EUAA, 16 March 2024
[264] Iraq, Penal Code, No. 111 of 1969, July 1969, url, art. 372; Iraq: Penal Code, 1969, url, art. 372
[265] Shafaq News, Acts and unclear legislation: Legal pursuits in Iraq over blasphemy and "immoral content", 3 October 2025, url
[266] Kurdistan24, Iraq Bans Roblox Over Sexual Exploitation, Blasphemy, and Online Blackmail Concerns, 21 October 2025, url
[267] MEI, Addressing challenges to tolerance and religious diversity in Iraq, 5 July 2023, url, RFI, Country Overview Iraq, March 2023, url, p. 4; USCIRF, Issue Brief: Religious Freedom Challenges in Iraq 10 Years After Isis's Genocide, September 2024, url, p. 7
[268] Nirij, Investigative Reports: The Demographic Change Haunts Minorities in the Nineveh Plain, 3 February 2025, url; Ali O.O. et al., Demographic Change and Social Cohesion In Post-Islamic State Iraq, 24 November 2024, url
[269] Shafaq News, Sanctuary under strain: Minorities hold on in Iraq's Kurdistan, 22 March 2025, url
[270] Tadros M. et al., The Handbook of Iraqi People's Heritage, 20 February 2025, url, p. 3; Shafaq News, Sanctuary under strain: Minorities hold on in Iraq's Kurdistan, 22 March 2025, url
[271] KCIL, Climate Change and Religious Minorities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: The Intersection of Environmental Crisis and Freedom of Religion or Belief, April 2026, url, pp. 20-24
[272] UNSC, Letter dated 23 December 2025 from the representatives of Denmark, Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, S/2025/84, 23 December 2025, url, p. 5

(a) Yazidis

The Yazidis are one of the oldest ethno-religious minorities, with communities primarily concentrated around the Sinjar (Shingal) Mountain in north-western Iraq, Shekhan district in the Duhok Governorate, and the districts of Talkeef and Bashiqa in the Ninewa Governorate. They also have communities in other parts of the Duhok area in the KRI.[273] They were among the communities most severely affected by the offensive launched by ISIL in August 2014. As of late 2025, more than 2 250 Yazidis, including over 1 200 women, remained missing.[274]

On 1 March 2021, Iraq enacted the Yazidi Female Survivors Law (YSL), widely described as a landmark piece of legislation and the first law in the Middle East specifically recognising conflict-related sexual violence and providing administrative reparations to survivors.[275] The law provides a broad package of reparative measures, including monthly financial allowances, education, healthcare, psychosocial rehabilitation, public-sector employment opportunities, housing and land allocation, and official recognition of the genocide committed against the Yazidi community.[276] Implementation of the law has continued during the reference period. By 31 October 2025, nearly 2 600 applications had reportedly been approved, including 1 341 relating to women and girls who survived sexual and gender-based violence.[277] As of November 2025, approximately 2 216 survivors were receiving monthly reparations under the scheme, while the Iraqi government had allocated monthly salaries to more than 2 400 Yazidi women and girls who survived ISIL captivity.[278] Some 2 500 persons were receiving financial support under the YSL as of February 2026;[279] however, more detailed data on the implementation of the law is not available.[280]

Despite these developments, significant shortcomings persisted in the implementation of the law,[281] including gaps between the legal framework and its practical application. Challenges

[273] F. Shayan, Yazidi Minority in Iraq in Handbook of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Lives, December March 2022, url, p. 378
[274] UNSC, Letter dated 23 December 2025 from the representatives of Denmark, Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, S/2025/843, 23 December 2025, url, p. 4
[275] C4JR - Coalition for Just Reparations, IRCT - International Rehabi Council for Torture Victims, Jiyan Foundation for Human Rights, published by CEDAW: Joint Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of Iraq's Periodic Report for the 92nd CEDAW Session (2nd February – 20th February 2026) on Justice and Reparations for Female Survivors of ISIL Conflict in Iraq, 5 January 2026, url, p. 5
[276] GHRD, The Yazidi Survivors Law and Iraq's Unmet Obligations Under International Human Rights Law, 10 April 2026, url
[277] UNSC, Letter dated 23 December 2025 from the representatives of Denmark, Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, S/2025/843, 23 December 2025, url, p. 4
[278] C4JR - Coalition for Just Reparations, IRCT - International Rehabi Council for Torture Victims, Jiyan Foundation for Human Rights, published by CEDAW: Joint Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of Iraq's Periodic Report for the 92nd CEDAW Session (2nd February – 20th February 2026) on Justice and Reparations for Female Survivors of ISIL Conflict in Iraq, 5 January 2026, url, p. 6
[279] UNOHCHR, Experts of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women [...], 4 February 2026, url
[280] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 17; C4JR, IRCT, and Jiyan Foundation for Human Rights, Joint Submission to CEDAW of Iraq's Periodic Report for the 92nd CEDAW Session (2nd February - 20th February 2026) on Justice and Reparations for Female Survivors of ISIL Conflict in Iraq, 5 January 2026, url, p. 6
[281] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 20 May 2026, url, para. 43 (e)

include burdensome procedures requiring survivors to initiate judicial complaints before accessing benefits,[282] delays in processing applications,[283] limited transparency regarding the allocation of reparations,[284] and the failure to establish the rehabilitation centre envisaged by the legislation.[285] Yazidis and other survivors reportedly continue to face difficulties in accessing documentation, compensation, healthcare, education, psychosocial services and economic reintegration.[286] The CEDAW Committee, in its February 2026 concluding observations, expressed concern that procedural requirements may expose survivors to stigma and re-traumatisation and limit effective access to reparations along with the absence of provisions addressing the rights and status of children born of conflict-related sexual violence. [287] Displacement also remained a significant concern. According to government figures, around 21 000 Yazidi families (approximately 125 000 people) remained displaced, primarily in camps in Duhok Governorate, despite the territorial defeat of ISIL.[288] The International Organization for Migration (IOM)reported that 200 000 Yazidis remained displaced, including those abroad.[289]

Following the recognition of Yazidi land rights in 2022[290] and the implementation of Cabinet Decision No. 227 of 2025, authorities expanded land registration in Sinjar. During 2025, 554 housing, land and property claims were formally registered, 599 compensation claims were processed,[291] and between April and December 2025 more than 3 500 households (approximately 20 900 individuals) received official title deeds.[292] Despite these developments, many Yazidis argue that sustainable return and recovery require not only housing and property restitution, but also security, access to basic services, employment opportunities, and effective public institutions.[293]

Yazidis continue to face economic and social disadvantages, particularly in areas recovering from conflict.[294] Legal and social challenges also persist regarding children born of rape during ISIL captivity. Under Article 26(2) of the National Identity Card Law,[295] children with one Muslim parent are automatically registered as Muslims, including children born to Yazidi women following rape by ISIL members.[296] Since Iraqi law does not permit conversion from Islam and

[282] GHRD, The Yazidi Survivors Law and Iraq's Unmet Obligations Under International Human Rights Law, 10 April 2026, url
[283] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 20 May 2026, url, para. 43 (e)
[284] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 20 May 2026, url, para. 43 (e)
[285] GHRD, The Yazidi Survivors Law and Iraq's Unmet Obligations Under International Human Rights Law, 10 April 2026, url
[286] UNSC, Letter dated 23 December 2025 from the representatives of Denmark, Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, S/2025/843, 23 December 2025, url, p. 6
[287] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 20 May 2026, url, para. 43 (e)
[288] Rudaw, UN envoy urges return of Iraq's long-displaced persons, including Yazidis, 18 November 2025, url
[289] Rudaw English, IOM says 200,000 Yazidis remain displaced 12 years after genocide, published on YouTube, 3 August 2026, url
[290] Rudaw, Over 600 IDPs return to Shingal from Duhok: Migration ministry, 19 May 2025, url; Rudaw, Most Yazidis returning to Shingal have not received promised cash: Official, 18 January 2025, url
[291] UN Iraq, Annual Results Report 2025, url, 19 June 2026, p. 51
[292] UN Iraq, Annual Results Report 2025, url, 19 June 2026, p. 51
[293] Shafaq News, The long shadow of Sinjar: Twelve years after the ISIS genocide, 03 August 2026, url
[294] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 26
[295] Iraq, National Card Law No. (3) of 2016, url
[296] GHRD, The Yazidi Survivors Law and Iraq's Unmet Obligations Under International Human Rights Law, 10 April 2026, url

Yazidi religious tradition generally requires both parents to be Yazidi, these children cannot ordinarily be accepted into the Yazidi community.[297] Sources describe this as a major obstacle to reintegration,[298] forcing some survivors to choose between returning to their community without their children or remaining separated from their families.[299] Yazidi women survivors continue to experience severe long-term psychological consequences, including high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and elevated risks of suicide and attempted suicide. Specialised mental health and psychosocial services remain insufficient to meet survivors' needs.[300] The CEDAW Committee further expressed concern that amendments to the Personal Status Law adopted in 2025, together with the continued practice of *mut'ah* (temporary) marriages,[301] a practice primarily associated with Shia Muslims,[302] may increase the vulnerability of internally displaced Yazidi women to sexual exploitation and trafficking, including through their exploitation in such marriages. [303]

(b) Christians

Estimates of Iraq's Christian population before 2003 ranged from approximately one million[304] to 1.5 million individuals.[305] Since then, the population declined to between 200 000[306] and 250 000,[307] with some church representatives estimating that fewer than 200 000 Christians remain in the country.[308] Christian representatives attributed this decline to armed conflict, attacks by extremist groups, displacement, insecurity, economic hardship, and concerns regarding the adequacy of state protection, all of which have contributed to sustained emigration.[309]

Nine years after the territorial defeat of ISIL, Christian communities continue to face obstacles to sustainable return, particularly in the Ninewa Plains and Mosul.[310] Reported challenges include incomplete reconstruction, unresolved property disputes, security concerns, limited access to basic services,[311] the continued influence of militias,[312] and weak law enforcement.[313] According to Ano Jawhar Abdoka, Secretary-General of the Christian Alliance in Iraq,

[297] GHRD, The Yazidi Survivors Law and Iraq's Unmet Obligations Under International Human Rights Law, 10 April 2026, url
[298] Xiao Liu, M., The Enduring Genocide against The Yazidis: How Iraq's Law on Religious Identity Violates the Human Rights of Yazidi Survivors of ISIS Captivity and Their Children Born of Sexual Violence, 2 April 2025, url, pp. 82, 88, 89, 92-93
[299] GHRD, The Yazidi Survivors Law and Iraq's Unmet Obligations Under International Human Rights Law, 10 April 2026, url
[300] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 20 May 2026, url, para 41 (d)
[301] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 20 May 2026, url, para 31 (e)
[302] New Lines Institute, How Temporary Marriages Can Exploit Vulnerable Women in Iraq, 24 April 2025, url
[303] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 20 May 2026, url, para 31 (e)
[304] Encyclopaedia Britannica, Arabs of Iraq, 1 June 2026, url
[305] New Arab (The), Iraq's Christians seek genuine political partnership and rights guarantees, 22 June 2026, url
[306] Encyclopaedia Britannica, Arabs of Iraq, 1 June 2026, url
[307] Encyclopaedia Britannica, Arabs of Iraq, 1 June 2026, url; Shafaq News, Iraq offers housing plots to returnee Christians, 11 July 2026, url
[308] Encyclopaedia Britannica, Arabs of Iraq, 1 June 2026, url
[309] SyiacPress, Christian communities in Iraq face ongoing persecution, displacement, and political marginalization, 14 January 2026, url
[310] New Arab (The), Iraq's Christians seek genuine political partnership and rights guarantees, 22 June 2026, url
[311] New Arab (The), Iraq's Christians seek genuine political partnership and rights guarantees, 22 June 2026, url
[312] Kurdistan24, Ano Jawhar Abdoka Urges Iraqi PM to Protect Christians and Ensure Fair Political Representation, 19 June 2026, url
[313] New Arab (The), Iraq's Christians seek genuine political partnership and rights guarantees, 22 June 2026, url

Christians continue to seek stronger state protection against interference by militias and influential economic actors, particularly in the Ninewa Plains and Mosul.[314] Community representatives have also criticised Article 26 of the National Identity Card Law, under which a child is automatically registered as Muslim if one parent is Muslim, arguing that it adversely affects children from Muslim-Christian families and children whose Christian parent converts to Islam.[315]

Property disputes remain a significant concern. Despite the establishment of committees tasked with restoring Christian-owned property,[316] sources indicate that illegal confiscation and occupation of Christian-owned land continued in Ninewa, including by elements of the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF), notably the 50th Brigade. Legal remedies have often been slow, inconsistently enforced, or obstructed by influential political, administrative or tribal actors,[317] while similar allegations of land appropriation have also been documented in Baghdad and the KRI.[318] Members of Iraq's Assyrian community held a protest in Duhok calling on Kurdish and Iraqi authorities to stop alleged encroachments on Assyrian-owned land and to enforce court rulings recognising their property rights. Organisers said the demonstration highlighted longstanding disputes over land ownership in northern Iraq, with participants alleging weak implementation of judicial decisions and continued threats to the presence of Assyrian communities in their ancestral areas.[319]

Political representation of Christians remains limited.[320] At the federal level, Christians hold five reserved seats in the Council of Representatives,[321] representing the governorates of Baghdad, Nineveh, Kirkuk, Erbil and Dohuk, despite the presence of Christian communities in other governorates.[322] Christian representatives have limited influence over political decision-making and continue to raise concerns regarding corruption in public-sector recruitment and limited employment opportunities.[323] In the KRI, minority representation was further reduced following the 2024 ruling of the Federal Supreme Court abolishing the previous minority quota system in the Kurdistan Parliament,[324] after which Christians, Turkmens, and Armenians shared a reduced number of reserved seats. Community representatives argued that these changes further limited minorities' ability to influence policies affecting their communities.[325]

[314] Kurdistan24, Ano Jawhar Abdoka Urges Iraqi PM to Protect Christians and Ensure Fair Political Representation, 19 June 2026, url
[315] ECJL, Iraqi Christians: The Story of a Community Under Pressure, 18 June 2026, url
[316] UNGA, Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review* - Iraq, 27 March 2025, url, para 9; USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iraq, 15 May 2023, url, p. 17; Rudaw, Sadr-led committee returns at least 200 occupied properties to their Christian owners, 17 December 2022, url
[317] BasNews, Christians Accuse Militias Of Seizing Lands In Iraq, 11 September 2025, url; ECJL, The Triple Marginalization of Iraq's Christians, 22 September 2025, url
[318] ECJL, The Triple Marginalization of Iraq's Christians, 22 September 2025, url
[319] Assyria Post (The), Assyrians in Northern Iraq protest ongoing Kurdish land grabs, 6 July 2026, url
[320] ECJL, Iraqi Christians: The Story of a Community Under Pressure, 18 June 2026, url
[321] ECJL, Iraqi Christians: The Story of a Community Under Pressure, 18 June 2026, url
[322] Jummar Media, Iraq's Christians: a fraught journey of political representation, 16 October 2025, url
[323] ECJL, Iraqi Christians: The Story of a Community Under Pressure, 18 June 2026, url
[324] New Arab (The), Iraq's top court declares Iraqi Kurdistan parliament's minority quota seats 'unconstitutional, 23 February 2024, url; New Region (The), Impact of abolishing minority quotas on Kurdistan Region's elections, 13 March 2024, url
[325] ECJL, Iraqi Christians: The Story of a Community Under Pressure, 18 June 2026, url

According to the European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ),[326] the closure of businesses engaged in the sale of alcohol, an economic activity traditionally associated with parts of the Christian community, has negatively affected livelihoods. The organisation further reported discrimination in access to public-sector employment, education, and public services.[327]

In July 2026, an alliance representing Iraq's Christian community has launched the 'Telkaif Initiative', a long-term strategy advocating legal reforms, property rights restitution, economic development, and constitutional protections to preserve the presence of indigenous Christians in the Ninewa Plains.[328]

(c) Turkmen

As part of a power-sharing agreement reached in August 2024, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) reportedly agreed to allocate the governorship of Kirkuk to the Iraqi Turkmen Front, marking the first time a Turkmen politician would hold the position since the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq.[329] Despite this development, Iraqi Turkmen continued to report limited political representation and institutional influence. Following the Federal Supreme Court's February 2024 decision abolishing the minority quota seats in the Kurdistan Parliament, Turkmen representation was reduced from five reserved seats to two.[330] Efforts by Turkmen political actors to secure greater representation in state institutions have largely been unsuccessful. In June 2026, local media also reported disputes between Arab and Turkmen political actors over appointments within Kirkuk's Health Department, reflecting continuing competition over representation in local institutions.[331] Turkmen are constitutionally recognised and politically represented but continue to report political marginalisation and socioeconomic challenges, particularly in disputed territories and areas affected by conflict.[332]

(d) Sunnis

Sectarian divisions continue to influence Iraq's political and social landscape. Despite efforts to promote national reconciliation following the territorial defeat of ISIL, challenges remain in strengthening trust and social cohesion between Sunni and Shia communities.[333] The large majority of Kurds in Iraq are Sunni.[334] Political actors representing the Sunni community have continued to raise concerns regarding political representation[335] and have argued that the application of anti-terrorism legislation has disproportionately affected Sunni communities in

[326] ECJL is a Christian legal advocacy group, url , n.d.
[327] ECJL, The Triple Marginalization of Iraq's Christians, 22 September 2025, url
[328] Kurdistan24, Christian Alliance Unveils 'Telkaif Initiative' to Safeguard Nineveh Plains Heritage, 26 July 2026, url
[329] New Arab (The), Iraq's Kirkuk governor post to rotate to Turkmen for first time since 2003, 15 april 2026, url
[330] Al Majalla, How Arabs and Kurds are sidelining Iraq's Turkmen community, 10 October 2024, url; New Arab (The), Iraq's top court declares Iraqi Kurdistan parliament's minority quota seats 'unconstitutional', 23 February 2024, url
[331] KirkukNow, Arab and Turkmen Clash Over Representation in Kirkuk's Health Department, 13 June 2026, url
[332] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 26
[333] J. Mahor, Sectarianism and ethnic conflict in Iraq: Iran & Iraq Relations post 2003, International Journal of Political Science and Governance 2025; 7(10), 17 October 2025, url, p. 243
[334] National Context (The), Why Iran's Kurds Are the Most Divided Kurdish Population, 25 March 2026, url
[335] J. Mahor, Sectarianism and ethnic conflict in Iraq: Iran & Iraq Relations post 2003, International Journal of Political Science and Governance 2025; 7(10), 17 October 2025, url, p. 243

the years following the conflict with ISIL,[336] while Iraq's political system continues to be dominated by Shia-led political parties and alliances.[337] The continued influence of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), including factions aligned with Iran, remains a source of political and security tension. Although the PMF are formally incorporated into Iraq's state security framework, some factions continue to operate with a significant degree of autonomy, and their relationship with the central government remains a subject of political debate.[338] In Sinjar, the legacy of ISIL's occupation continues to affect intercommunal relations. Relations between Yazidi and Sunni Arab communities remain characterised by mutual mistrust, posing ongoing challenges to reconciliation, social cohesion and the sustainable return of displaced populations. [339]

Sunni Arabs returnees faced discrimination and social friction upon return, particularly from minority communities who perceived them as associated to ISIL. Some Sunni families reported fear of stigmatisation, obstacles to reintegration into diverse communities[340] and difficulties accessing their civil documentation.[341]

(e) Other minorities

Afro-Iraqis, whose ancestors include East African slaves and migrants brought to Iraq over several centuries, are concentrated primarily in Basrah Governorate. According to unofficial estimates cited by media sources, the community numbers between 1.5 and 2 million people, although no official population data are available.[342] Afro-Iraqis remained without parliamentary representation or senior positions in local government and continue to seek official recognition as a distinct minority.[343] According to a 2026 Carnegie Middle East commentary, Afro-Iraqis continue to report experiences of racial discrimination and socio-economic marginalisation, including in education and employment, while music and traditional performance practices remain an important means of preserving their cultural identity.[344]

Fayli Kurds, who are predominantly Shia Muslims and ethnically Kurdish,[345] are distributed across key towns and cities extending from Sulaymaniyah to Ali al-Gharbi along the Iraq–Iran border zone.[346] They were subjected to systematic persecution under the former Ba'athist regime. From 1980, hundreds of thousands were reportedly deprived of Iraqi nationality,

[336] Al Jazeera, Iraq frees over 19,000 prisoners under new amnesty, including some ex-ISIL, 13 May 2025, url; Rudaw, Iraq moves to ease prison overcrowding as some facilities exceed 300% capacity: Ministry, 31 May 2026, url
[337] J. Mahor, Sectarianism and ethnic conflict in Iraq: Iran & Iraq Relations post 2003, International Journal of Political Science and Governance 2025; 7(10), 17 October 2025, url, p. 243
[338] J. Mahor, Sectarianism and ethnic conflict in Iraq: Iran & Iraq Relations post 2003, International Journal of Political Science and Governance 2025; 7(10), 17 October 2025, url, p. 243
[339] Geneva Call, Rebuilding trust in Sinjar, Iraq: long-term engagement and inclusive dialogue as tools for civilian protection, 18 November 2025, url
[340] ICCT, Case Management of Iraqi Adult Returnees in al-Amal: Drawing Lessons from Comparable Contexts, February 2026, url
[341] K. Palani, 'Life After Hope': Integration Experiences of Families Returning from Al-Hol to Iraq, 7 October 2025, url
[342] Rudaw, Black Iraqis running for parliament hope to end discrimination, 7 November 2025, url
[343] Rudaw, Black Iraqis running for parliament hope to end discrimination, 7 November 2025, url
[344] Carnegie Middle East Center, Music, Memory, and Identity in the Afro-Iraqi Community, 8 May 2026, url
[345] Kurdistan24, The Day Baghdad Wrote Exile Into Law: Feyli Kurds and the Mechanics of Dispossession, 4 April 2026, url
[346] Amwaj, Fayli Kurds struggle with division, co-option as Iraq forms new government, 3 June 2026, url

deported to Iran, and had their property confiscated, while thousands of Faily Kurdish men and boys were subjected to enforced disappearance and were reportedly executed. In 2010, the Iraqi High Criminal Court recognised the persecution of Fayli Kurds as genocide and crimes against humanity.[347] Following the 2003 US-led invasion and the fall of Ba'ath Party rule, approximately 100 000 predominantly stateless Fayli Kurds reportedly returned to Iraq from Iran and other countries. Their return initially raised hopes within the community that Iraq's newly ascendant Shia and Kurdish authorities, having themselves experienced persecution, would recognise and address the legacies of dispossession and violence against Fayli Kurds.[348] Although measures were introduced after 2003 to restore nationality, some Fayli Kurds continue to face difficulties in obtaining civil documentation, recovering confiscated property, and securing full restitution and recognition of their rights.[349] Representatives have continued to call for the implementation of constitutional protections and transitional justice measures concerning the 1980 deportations.[350]

The **Sabean-Mandaeans**, one of Iraq's oldest religious communities, are traditionally concentrated in Baghdad and the southern governorates,[351] including Thi Qar and Missan,[352] with a smaller community residing in the KRI.[353] Estimates of Mandeans living in Iraq vary considerably, ranging from fewer than 50 000[354] to between 10 000[355] and 20 000,[356] compared with approximately 100 000 before 2003.[357] The decline is largely attributed to emigration following years of insecurity and sectarian violence,[358] as well as environmental degradation affecting the community's traditional way of life.[359] The community has also experienced internal displacement, with some members relocating from southern Iraqi cities to the Kurdistan Region. Erbil has reportedly received thousands of Mandaeans, with the city becoming home to hundreds of Mandaean goldsmiths, reflecting gold-working's traditional and predominant role in the community's economy.[360] According to the head of the Mandaean Council of Elders, the community lacks representation within Iraq's security institutions and has no members serving in the army or police, apart from personnel assigned to protect religious sites.[361]

The **Kaka'i**, also known as Ahl-e Haqq or Yarsan, are a small ethno-religious minority whose population in Iraq is estimated by community representatives at between 110 000 and

[347] Kurdistan24, The Day Baghdad Wrote Exile Into Law: Feyli Kurds and the Mechanics of Dispossession, 4 April 2026, url
[348] Amwaj, Fayli Kurds struggle with division, co-option as Iraq forms new government, 3 June 2026, url
[349] Kurdistan24, The Day Baghdad Wrote Exile Into Law: Feyli Kurds and the Mechanics of Dispossession, 4 April 2026, url
[350] Shafaq News, Feyli Kurds: A "blood-stained" wound still awaiting justice after 46 years, 1 April 2026, url
[351] Rudaw, Iraq's Sabean-Mandaean community shrinks amid continued marginalization, 4 September 2025, url
[352] Türkiye Today, The Mandaeans in Iraq, whose marriage depends on river water levels, 28 July 2025, url
[353] Rudaw, Iraq's Sabean-Mandaean community shrinks amid continued marginalization, 4 September 2025, url
[354] Rudaw, Iraq's Sabean-Mandaean community shrinks amid continued marginalization, 4 September 2025, url
[355] Türkiye Today, The Mandaeans in Iraq, whose marriage depends on river water levels, 28 July 2025, url
[356] Shafaq News, Mandaean community in Iraq marks Golden Baptism feast in white robes and running water, 17 May 2026, url
[357] Türkiye Today, The Mandaeans in Iraq, whose marriage depends on river water levels, 28 July 2025, url
[358] Rudaw, Iraq's Sabean-Mandaean community shrinks amid continued marginalization, 4 September 2025, url
[359] Türkiye Today, The Mandaeans in Iraq, whose marriage depends on river water levels, 28 July 2025, url
[360] Shafaq News, Mandaean community in Iraq marks Golden Baptism feast in white robes and running water, 17 May 2026, url
[361] Rudaw, Iraq's Sabean-Mandaean community shrinks amid continued marginalization, 4 September 2025, url

200 000.[362] They are concentrated primarily in areas southeast of Kirkuk, including Daquq and the Ninewa Plains around Hamdaniya, as well as in Diyala, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah governorates. Kaka'i are generally considered to be ethnically Kurdish, although some communities are Arabic-speaking, and many speak the Machodialect. Their syncretic religion originated in western Iran in the fourteenth century and incorporates elements of Zoroastrianism and Shia Islam, while maintaining distinct beliefs and religious practices. Although the KRG recognises the Kaka'i faith, it is not formally recognised under federal Iraqi law, and adherents are generally registered as Muslims on official identity documents. Kaka'i continue to face discrimination, limited official recognition, and security concerns.[363]

The **Shabaks** are a longstanding religious community in Iraq, comprising several tribes and speaking a distinct dialect influenced by Turkish, Kurdish, and Persian. They are predominantly Muslim, with approximately 65 % identifying as Shia and 35 % as Sunni. The community is primarily concentrated in the Ninewa Plains, particularly around Mosul, Tilkif and Qaraqosh, as well as in Bashiqa, Bartella, and Nimrud.[364] The Shabak community has historically faced attacks, massacres and forced displacement during periods of political instability in Iraq. Uncertainty over Shabak identity[365] has been used by regional nationalist groups to advance competing agendas, contributing to the community's marginalisation and assimilation pressures. Under Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath regime, the Shabaks faced severe repression and systematic Arabisation policies aimed at undermining their ethnic identity. [366] Since 2015, Shabaks have gained greater political visibility.[367] However, they remain fragmented because of internal sectarian divisions and Kurdish-Arab tensions. Sunni Shabak have been seen to align with and support the KRG, while Shia Shabak are more sympathetic to the central Iraqi government.[368]

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

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

During the reporting period, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and civic space in Iraq continued to shrink.[369] Human rights defenders, particularly women's rights defenders, journalists and activists, continued to face persistent attacks, intimidation, and judicial

[362] MRG, Kaka'i in Iraq, n.d., url
[363] MRG, Kaka'i in Iraq, n.d., url
[364] E. Korkmaz, A Minority at the Intersection of Religious and Ethnic Identities in Iraq: Shabaks, 20 September 2025, url, p. 19
[365] Les Moyen-Orient, Les Shabaks, minorité kurde ou arabe ? Retour sur une communauté irakienne méconnue (3/3). La communauté shabak, menacée à l'extérieur, divisée à l'intérieur, 6 July 2021, url
[366] E. Korkmaz, A Minority at the Intersection of Religious and Ethnic Identities in Iraq: Shabaks, 20 September 2025, url, pp. 25-26
[367] E. Korkmaz, A Minority at the Intersection of Religious and Ethnic Identities in Iraq: Shabaks, 20 September 2025, url, p. 26
[368] MRG, Shabak in Iraq, updated in May 2026, url
[369] UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para. 61

harassment in connection of their work. During the first half of 2026, such attacks further escalated.[370]

In March 2026, prominent women's right defender and activist, Yanar Mohammed, was assassinated in Baghdad. Although authorities announced an investigation, no information on its progress has been made publicly available.[371] Civil activist Dirgham Majid survived a second assassination attempt on 21 April 2026 in Iraq's Babil province, when unidentified masked gunmen on a motorcycle opened fire on him, injuring him in the leg. He had previously survived another reported assassination attempt in July 2024.[372] Alongside these attacks, Iraqi authorities continued to restrict civic space through vague 'indecent content' laws, punitive measures against independent media, the use of 'dormant arrest warrants'[373] to intimidate critics, and unlawful force against peaceful protesters.[374]

Freedom of expression continued to be restricted through the use of criminal and administrative measures.[375] Authorities continued to rely on criminal defamation and other vaguely worded provisions of the 1969 Penal Code[376] to arrest and prosecute activists and journalists, social media users, human rights defenders, and other individuals critical of the authorities.[377]

The authorities also prosecuted individuals for allegedly promoting the ideas of the banned Ba'ath Party. Such prosecutions may be brought under both provisions of the Iraqi Penal Code and Law No. 32 of 2016[378] on Banning the Ba'ath Party and Racist, Terrorist and Takfirist Parties and Activities, which not only prohibits the Ba'ath Party but also criminalises activities and entities that espouse, incite, glorify or promote racism, terrorism, takfirism, or sectarian or nationalistic cleansing.[379] In August 2025, a court in Wasit sentenced a person to 10 years in prison for promoting Ba'ath Party ideas through their social media accounts.[380] In May 2026, a court in Karkh sentenced four people to six years in prison for promoting Ba'ath Party ideas,

[370] AI, Iraq: Government must chart a new course by ending impunity and upholding human rights, 17 August 2026, url
[371] AI, Iraq: Government must chart a new course by ending impunity and upholding human rights, 17 August 2026, url
[372] Shafaq News, Babil court jails man over attempted assassination of Iraqi activist, 23 July 2026, url
[373] "A 'dormant arrest warrant' refers to an unexecuted arrest warrant that has not been cancelled and therefore remains legally in force. Under Article 94(A) of Iraq's Criminal Procedure Code No. 23 of 1971, as amended, an arrest warrant remains valid until it is executed or cancelled by the issuing authority or by a higher authority legally empowered to do so.". Iraq, Iraq: Criminal Procedure Code 23 OF 1971 (as amended in 2010), 14 February 1971, url
[374] AI, Iraq: Government must chart a new course by ending impunity and upholding human rights, 17 August 2026, url
[375] UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para. 61; IOHR, Dhi Qar: Books on Trial, 15 February 2026, url
[376] CIVICUS Lens, 'The election felt like a formality because it took place in a context hostile for dissent, pluralism and rights', 2 January 2026, url; UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para 61
[377] UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para.61
[378] Iraq, Act No. 32 of 2016 Banning the Baath Party and Racist, Terrorist and Takfirist Parties and Activities, 17 October 2016, url
[379] Jurist, Four convicted in Iraq for promoting banned Ba'ath Party ideology, 5 May 2026, url; New Arab (The), Iraq passes bill banning the Baath party, 31 July 2016, url
[380] Iraqi News Agency, Ten years imprisonment for a convict promotes the ideas of the banned Ba'ath Party, 17 August 2025, url

reportedly after finding banned political materials on their phones.[381] In July 2026, the same Karkh court sentenced 18 people to three years in prison for promoting the Ba'ath Party on social media.[382] Influential political actors and armed groups reportedly used intimidation, arbitrary arrests, judicial proceedings, and other coercive measures against individuals expressing dissent. These measures included responses to criticism concerning corruption,[383] governance, public services, environmental issues, and accountability for abuses committed during the Tishreen protests.[384] The increased use of legislative and administrative measures, including laws relating to public morality and other broadly defined offences, further restricted peaceful expression of political dissent,[385] including human rights advocacy, criticism of public authorities, cultural initiatives, and political activity, particularly in the governorates of Basrah and Thi Qar.[386]

Political opposition figures also faced arrest, prosecution and other forms of pressure, including in the KRI by the Kurdish authorities.[387] In the KRI, Shaswar Abdulwahid of the New Generation Movement and Lahur Sheikh Jangi Talabani of the People's Front Party, were arrested in 2025, while the offices of the People's Front Party's media outlet, Zoom Television, were raided and closed. UNAMI expressed concern regarding due process and the perception that these measures were politically motivated.[388] An anonymous source interviewed by EUAA observed an increasing number of 'politically motivated' arrests.[389] For example, in February 2026, the son of a prominent Sunni figure, Mashaan al-Jbouri, was arrested[390] and sentenced to five years in prison on corruption charges.[391] The same source further observed that 'there are other individual cases of political targeting against specific figures as well. The charges in these cases may be legitimate, but the underlying motivation is political rather than a genuine anti-corruption effort.'[392] Local authorities and actors affiliated with the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) reportedly carried out arbitrary arrests and detentions of activists, protest organisers, and social media content creators. [393]

Peaceful assembly and protest activity also remained subject to restrictions and the use of force.[394] Although Iraq did not witness large-scale nationwide demonstrations during the reporting period, smaller protests continued, primarily concerning unemployment, public services, and civil rights.[395] Amnesty International indicated that, in 2025, security forces used excessive force, including live ammunition and tear gas, to disperse protests in Baghdad and

[381] AP News, Iraqi court sentences 4 to prison for promoting banned Baath Party, 4 May 2026, url; Jurist, Four convicted in Iraq for promoting banned Ba'ath Party ideology, 5 May 2026, url
[382] INA (Iraqi News Agency), Karkh Criminal Court sentences 18 to prison for promoting banned Baath Party, 14 July 2026, url
[383] GCHR, GCHR's 37th Periodic Report on Human Rights Violations in Iraq, 14 April 2026, url
[384] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url
[385] Ali Z., The War on Women in Iraq in Jummar Media, 10 February 2026, url
[386] IOHR, Dhi Qar: Books on Trial, 15 February 2026, url
[387] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 211
[388] UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para.60; ACLED, Leaders tighten control as repression shapes Iraq's 2025 elections, 5 November 2025, url
[389] Anonymous source, interview with EUAA, 26 June 2026
[390] +964, Son of prominent Sunni politician arrested in Baghdad on corruption charges, 26 February 2026, url
[391] +964, Iraqi politician Yazan al-Jubouri jailed five years for $31 million influence fraud, 23 June 2026, url
[392] Anonymous source, interview with EUAA, 26 June 2026
[393] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url
[394] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url
[395] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 10

southern Iraq.[396] Demonstrations driven by economic grievances, corruption, and poor public services resulted in arbitrary arrests, prolonged detentions, and harassment of activists, with little accountability for abuses. Particularly violent crackdowns occurred during protests in Nasiriyah and Basrah, including demonstrations over inadequate water and electricity services.[397] More recently, peaceful protesters demanding basic rights, including those who took part in demonstrations against electricity cuts in the southern city of al-Kut in June and July 2026, continued to face unlawful force and arbitrary detention by security forces.[398] In the KRI, security forces repeatedly restricted peaceful assembly, particularly during protests over unpaid salaries and corruption, through the use of tear gas, arbitrary arrests, and detention.[399] Demonstrations in Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, and Arbat were met with force, while journalists covering protests faced harassment, assault, arrest, and restrictions on reporting, reflecting wider concerns about restrictions on peaceful dissent and media freedom in both Iraq and the KRI.[400]

An anonymous source maintained that, in the past few years, the main political opponents of the Shia establishment and the parties dominating the Iraqi government were protest movements and civil society actors. Over the past two years, however, these protest movements, civil society actors, and youth groups have been significantly weakened or co-opted, and they are no longer the primary political opponents targeted by the elites and the Iraqi government.[401]

The Tishreen movement, in particular, has been affected by internal fragmentation and the incorporation of some protesters into established political parties and networks. The movement's lack of cohesive leadership made it more vulnerable to division and co-optation, while Iraq's political elites have used co-optation alongside force and propaganda to weaken dissent.[402] The source further noted that Iran-backed Shia militias increasingly dominated Iraqi political and media life, especially since the war between the US-Israel and Iran started. According to the same source, anyone expressing views critical of Iran or its proxies inside the country has been targeted as a political opponent.[403] For example, the TV station UTV ran a programme hosted by a famous anchor, Ahmed Mala Talal, in which he stated that Iran's war is not Iraq's war.[404] The following day, Ahmed Mala Talal announced that he would not present that evening's episode of his programme on UTV after the hotel housing the programme's studio was struck in a drone attack in Baghdad.[405] The available sources do not establish a direct link between this statement and the drone attack on the hotel.

[396] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url
[397] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url
[398] AI, Iraq: Government must chart a new course by ending impunity and upholding human rights, 17 August 2026, url
[399] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url
[400] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url
[401] Anonymous source, interview with EUAA, 26 June 2026
[402] New Arab (The), Five years on: The legacy of Iraq's Tishreen protest movement, 28 October 2024, url
[403] Anonymous source, interview with EUAA, 26 June 2026
[404] Anonymous source, interview with EUAA, 26 June 2026; UTV News, published on YouTube, أحمد ملا طلال متسائلا: أحنه العراقيين شعلينه بالحـرب بين أمريكا وإيران؟ [Why are we Iraqia involved in the war between the US and Iran?'], 16 March 2026, url
[405] +964, برنامج سياسي آخر يعتذر: قصف الرشيد منع البث, [Another political programme apologises: Al-Rasheed bombing prevented broadcast', 17 March 2026, url

Restrictions on freedom of movement also affect some political actors, particularly members of Kurdish political parties.[406] Following the KDP's withdrawal from disputed territories in October 2017, the party's ability to resume its political activities has varied by location. In Kirkuk, the KDP reopened its organisational office in April 2025, although the security and political situation remains sensitive.[407] In Sinjar, the return of a KDP-affiliated local administration remains contested.[408]

1.4.1 Journalists and media workers

Years of authoritarian rule, foreign intervention, and armed conflict have contributed to a climate in which independent journalism is often perceived as a threat to the state. Certain institutions and religious figures remained largely beyond public scrutiny. Media outlets investigating alleged corruption involving senior officials have, in some cases, faced sanctions or suspension, reportedly for violating media regulations or undermining state institutions.[409] According to the Iraqi Observatory for Human Rights (IOHR), press freedom experienced a 'sharp and unprecedented decline' since October 2023 amid increasing intimidation campaigns and political polarisation, resulting in a 'systematic closure of the public sphere' through the use of legal and security measures against journalists and media workers, and increased self-censorship.[410]

Despite constitutional guarantees under Article 38 of the Iraqi Constitution, which provides for freedom of expression, press, and peaceful assembly,[411] these rights were undermined in practice by authorities, armed groups, and legal frameworks criminalising defamation and vaguely defined offences.[412] Iraq's Penal Code contains provisions such as Article 403 (public decency) [413] and Article 434 (defamation),[414] which are frequently used to prosecute,[415]

[406] Anonymous source, interview with EUAA, 26 June 2026
[407] Kurdistan24, KDP Returns to Kirkuk After 8-Year Absence, 5 April 2025, url; Kurdish Globe, KDP reopens office, calls for unity in Kirkuk, 14 April 2025, url
[408] KirkukNow, Shingalis Reject Return of Pro-KDP Local Administration, 16 May 2026, url
[409] RSF, Country Profile, Iraq, url
[410] EPIC, ISHM: April 30 – May 7, 2026, 7 May 2026, url
[411] IOHR, Lawsuit filed against journalist for freedom of expression, 26 October 2024, url; IOHR, Impunity in Iraq: a systemic failure undermining press freedom and the rule of law, 2 November 2025, url; BTI, p. 11
[412] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 11
[413] Art. 403 reads as follows: '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 circumstance.', Iraq, Penal Code, No. 111 of 1969, July 1969, url, art. 403
[414] Art. 434 reads as follows: 'Insult is the imputation to another of something dishonorable or disrespectful or the hurting of his feelings even though it does not include an imputation to him of a particular matter. Any person who insults another is punishable by a period of detention not exceeding 1 year plus a fine not exceeding 100 dinars or by one of those penalties. If such insult Is published in a newspaper or publication or medium it is considered an aggravating circumstance'. Iraq, Penal Code, No. 111 of 1969, July 1969, url, art. 434; IOHR, Lawsuit filed against journalist for freedom of expression, 26 October 2024, url
[415] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 11; AI, IRAQ: Reigning Impunity Amnesty International: Submission to The 48th Session of The Upr Working Group, January – February 2025, url, pp. 2-3

intimidate,[416] and arrest journalists and critics of authorities.[417] In 2025, authorities, political actors, and PMF[418] continued to intimidate, harass, arrest, and prosecute journalists and media workers.[419] Authorities invoked broad and vaguely defined concepts such as 'public morals' and 'indecent content' to restrict criticism of political and religious figures,[420] often under the pretext of maintaining stability or protecting public morality.[421] In 2025, law enforcement under the Ministry of Interior also carried out arrests during campaigns targeting online content deemed to violate 'public decency and morals', a term that remains undefined in law.[422] IOHR has described these developments as an increasing 'institutionalisation of repression', involving coordinated legal, administrative and judicial measures alongside tighter restrictions on social media content.[423]

Security forces and actors affiliated with political parties continued to use violence and intimidation against journalists, including during coverage of protests.[424] IOHR documented dozens of violations against journalists and media workers in 2025 and early 2026, including abductions, assaults, destruction of equipment, enforced disappearances, and judicial harassment.[425] IOHR further noted that more than 500 journalists have been killed since 2003, alongside continuing patterns of extrajudicial killings, torture, threats, and arbitrary detention targeting media workers, with little or no accountability for perpetrators.[426] On 31 March 2026, American journalist Shelly Kittleson was kidnapped in Baghdad by Kataib Hezbollah, an Iran-backed armed group.[427] She was released about a week later after negotiations reportedly involving the release of detained militia members and with the condition that she would leave Iraq.[428] In September 2026, an Iraqi court sentenced a member of the militia to 15 years in prison for his role in the kidnapping.[429] As of June 2026, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) had documented no killings of journalists in Iraq between 2025 and 2026.[430] However, in a separate article, the same source indicated that one journalist was killed in Iraq in 2025 in a suspected Turkish strike.[431]

[416] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 11
[417] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2024, 29 April 2025, url; RSF, Country Profile, Iraq, url; AI, Iraq: Lawmakers must ensure that new law does not unduly restrict freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly, 1 August 2025, url; CIVICUS, Monitor, Tracking civic space, Journalists receives new sentence ahead of planned release from prison, n.d., url; AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 207
[418] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url
[419] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url,
[420] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 11
[421] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url
[422] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url
[423] IOHR, Press freedom in Iraq: The Return to intimidation, 3 May 2026, url; EPIC, ISHM: April 30 – May 7, 2026, 7 May 2026, url
[424] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url
[425] IOHR, Press freedom in Iraq: The Return to intimidation, 3 May 2026, url
[426] IOHR, Impunity in Iraq: A systemic failure undermining press freedom and the rule of law, 2 November 2025, url
[427] Shafaq News, Kidnapped American journalist Shelly Kittleson freed in Baghdad, 7 April 2026, url
[428] AP News, American journalist Shelly Kittleson has been released week after kidnapping in Iraq, Rubio says, 8 April 2026, url
[429] Arab News, Iraq sentences kidnapper of US journalist to 15 years in prison, 31 August 2026, url
[430] CPJ, Explore CPJ's database of attacks on the press – Iraq, n.d., (filtered by dates from 2025 to 2026), url
[431] CPJ, Record number of journalists killed in 2025; Israel responsible for two-thirds of deaths, 25 February 2026, url

Journalists in the KRI also faced detention, harassment, and legal action, particularly when reporting on corruption or human rights issues.[432] According to the Metro Center for Journalists Rights and Advocacy, 315 violations affecting journalists were documented in 2025, including physical assaults, threats, or direct attacks on journalist.[433] Media workers were arrested while carrying out their professional duties, including when covering peaceful protests and security incidents. Reports indicated that such incidents were rarely followed by accountability,[434] while courts continued to extend the detention of journalists, activists and government critics through successive charges.[435] In August 2025, journalist Sherwan Sherwani was sentenced to a further four years' imprisonment shortly before his expected release;[436] although an appeals court later reduced the sentence, the case was cited by sources as illustrating the use of repeated prosecutions to prolong detention.[437] In April 2026, Sherwan reportedly began a hunger strike after prison authorities refused his requests for temporary leave and transfer to a correctional facility in Sulaymaniyah.[438] Further incidents were reported in 2026. In February, security forces reportedly raided and closed the offices of NRT Satellite Channel in Erbil and Duhok, confiscated its equipment, and prevented its staff from working in the two governorates. In April, journalist Ayoub Ali Warti was reportedly arrested in Erbil while preparing a report on pollution and gas emissions from oil refineries, while security forces in Duhok reportedly assaulted and removed a Channel 8 crew covering a student protest. That same month, journalist and political activist Sabah Al-Atroushi and civil society activist Reber Ahmed Aymanki were arrested after calling for protests over rising electricity bills and a controversial electricity contract; they were subsequently released on bail. In August 2025, journalist Jawa Rawan Mahmoud and her team were reportedly assaulted and prevented from covering the trial of political activist Shaswar Abdulwahed, with their equipment confiscated.[439] Media-related prosecutions in the KRI also increasingly reflected political rivalries between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). According to the Metro Center, authorities increasingly bypassed the Kurdistan Journalism Law by prosecuting journalists under the 2008 Law on Misuse of Telecommunication Devices, which provides for prison sentences of up to five years. The organisation reported that more than ten publishing-related cases in recent months had been pursued under this law rather than specialised press legislation, describing the practice as politically motivated and warning that it undermined both press freedom and the rule of law.[440]

Political interference also affected media outlets associated with opposition movements. On 4 April 2026, security forces reportedly affiliated with the KDP raided the Erbil and Duhok offices of NRT TV, closing the premises and confiscating broadcasting equipment without a

[432] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url
[433] Shafaq News, 300+ Press freedom violations in Kurdistan in 2025, watchdog says, 17 January 2026, url
[434] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url
[435] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url
[436] CPJ, CPJ, partners urge Iraqi Kurdistan to free journalist Sherwan Sherwani, 24 September 2025, url
[437] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 66
[438] KirkukNow, Journalist Sherwan Sherwani on Hunger Strike for Rejecting Requests by Prison, 23 April 2026, url
[439] GCHR, GCHR's periodic report on human rights violations in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, 19 June 2026, url
[440] Channel8, Metro Center: Bypassing Press Law for Telecom Statute Threatens Press Freedom in Kurdistan, 22 June 2026, url

court order. The KRG Ministry of Culture stated that it had not been informed in advance of the operation and had received no official notification regarding the closures.[441]

The regulatory environment further constrained independent journalism. IOHR has criticised the Media and Communications Commission (CMC), arguing that it has shifted from a regulatory body towards a 'punitive tool' through bans and suspensions that restrict critical voices and promote a unilateral media discourse aligned with powerful political forces.[442] In 2026, the CMC introduced measures extending broadcasting regulations to digital content, including a monitoring mechanism known as the 'Professional Commitment Registry', raising concerns about increased self-censorship.[443] The CMC also suspended television programmes for content considered offensive to divine entities or religious beliefs,[444] imposed disciplinary measures on channels for allegedly violating decency and public-conduct rules,[445] and banned television presenters from appearing on media outlets.[446] According to the October 2025 Transparency Report of Meta, the company received two requests from the CMC to restrict access to Facebook posts containing allegations of corruption and bias against senior judicial officials. Although Meta stated that the posts did not violate its Community Standards, access was restricted within Iraq on the basis of alleged non-compliance with local law.[447] In 2026, Iraqi authorities also took regulatory action against the Saudi-owned broadcaster Al Arabiya Al Hadath and Al Jazeera English, citing alleged violations of broadcasting regulations. The measures were linked to reporting on a convoy carrying Iranian and PMF flags and on a strike targeting the Habbaniyah military base. Authorities stated that the broadcasts contained inaccurate or misleading information and undermined state institutions and instructed both outlets to remove or amend the content.[448]

Media outlets in Iraq remained closely linked to political parties,[449] powerful business interests,[450] and religious or ethnic constituencies, which shape editorial policy[451] and benefit from stable funding and institutional support.[452] The TV channel Al-Forat, for example, is linked to the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, while religious communities maintain their own media outlets, such as the Christian Ishtar TV. The Kurdish media landscape is highly organised, and opposition parties are represented through channels such as NRT TV, linked to the 'New Generation' movement.[453] Against this backdrop, independent outlets face financial pressure and regulatory constraints, while digital platforms are also subject to increasing oversight.[454] In this context, independent media struggle to compete with well-funded, politically affiliated

[441] GCHR, GCHR's 37th Periodic Report on Human Rights Violations in Iraq, 14 April 2026, url
[442] IOHR, Press freedom in Iraq: The Return to intimidation, 3 May 2026, url
[443] IOHR, Journalism in Iraq: Reporting from the Red Zone, 12 April 2026, url
[444] Shafaq News, Iraq media watchdog suspends UTV program for 10 days, 17 December 2025, url
[445] Shafaq News, Iraq imposes media bans, fines tv channels over broadcast violations, 25 January 2026, url
[446] Shafaq News, Iraq's CMC halts two TV hosts for 90 days. 28 June 2026, url
[447] GCHR, GCHR's 36th Periodic Report on Human Rights Violations in Iraq, 27 October 2025, url
[448] CPJ, Global press freedom violations during the Iran war, 19 March 2026, url
[449] RSF, Country Profile, Iraq, url; BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 11
[450] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 11
[451] RSF, Country Profile, Iraq, url
[452] Shafaq News, The New era of control: Can Iraq's free press survive its politically-tainted rulers?, 25 December 2025, url
[453] RSF, Country Profile, Iraq, url
[454] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 11

outlets and face sustained financial pressure,[455] leaving independent journalism particularly vulnerable and undermining its capacity to provide sustained scrutiny of public institutions.[456] Although digital media and social platforms provide alternative spaces for public discussion, political and economic elites remain highly active in these arenas, shaping public discourse and influencing debate, thereby limiting the extent to which they can offset structural inequalities in the media landscape.[457]

According to Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Iraq position declined from 152nd in 2025 to 162nd in the 2026 World Press Freedom Index,[458] reflecting a continued deterioration in press freedom conditions.[459] The CPJ also reported that Iraq accounts for a significant proportion of missing journalists globally, with cases of abduction, enforced disappearance, and killings rarely resulting in accountability.[460] The online data platform, Statista, reported that 12 journalists were missing in Iraq in 2025.[461]

Access to information remained another structural constraint. In February 2025, Iraq's parliament held a first reading of a draft Right to Information Law which, if enacted in its proposed form, could further restrict access to government information.[462] Civil society organisations, journalists and experts raised concerns that several provisions would limit access to official information and unduly restrict freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly.[463] As of early 2026, the legislation had not been enacted and remained politically contested.[464] Government transparency remained weak and access to official documents limited.[465]

A cybercrime bill that has been repeatedly reintroduced would also provide severe penalties, including life imprisonment, for online posts deemed to endanger 'the independence, unity or integrity of the country, or its economic, political, military or security interests', raising further concerns regarding the potential criminalisation of legitimate journalistic and online expression.[466]

[455] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 11; Shafaq News, The New era of control: Can Iraq's free press survive its politically-tainted rulers?, 25 December 2025, url
[456] Shafaq News, The New era of control: Can Iraq's free press survive its politically-tainted rulers?, 25 December 2025, url
[457] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 11
[458] RSF (Reporters Without Borders), Iraq, n.d., url
[459] New Region (The), Iraq has third-highest number of missing journalists in the world: Watchdog, 31 December 2025, url
[460] CPJ, US journalist Shelly Kittleson kidnapped in Iraq, 1 April 2026, url
[461] Statista, The Deadliest Countries for Journalists, 30 April 2026, url
[462] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2024, 29 April 2025, url
[463] Art. 19, Iraq: MPs must propose substantive amendments to draft right to information law, 13 September 2024, url; AI, Iraq: Lawmakers must ensure that new law does not unduly restrict freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly, 1 August 2025, url
[464] Al Tamimi & Co., Iraq's right to access information law: outlook for 2026, 2 February 2026, url
[465] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 11
[466] RSF, Country Profile, Iraq, url

1.4.2 Individuals with (perceived) affiliation to ISIL

(a) Legal framework

Both the Anti-Terrorism Law No. 13 of 2005 in Federal Iraq[467] and the Anti-Terror Law No. 3 of 2006 in the KRI[468] contain broad and vaguely defined provisions relating to terrorism.[469] In Federal Iraq, the Anti-Terrorism Law mandates the death penalty for a wide range of terrorist-related offences, including for those who incite, plan, finance, or assist terrorist acts, applying the same penalty as for principal perpetrators.[470] In the KRI, the Anti-Terror Law provides for sentences ranging from imprisonment for less than 15 years to life imprisonment or the death penalty. [471] It also allows courts to accept confessions obtained under duress if supported by other evidence.[472]

The death penalty remains a significant feature of the legal framework applicable to terrorism-related offences. As of February 2026, over 8 000 prisoners, mostly charged with terrorism-related offenses,[473] were on the death row.[474] The Amnesty Law enacted in January 2025 has led to the release of 41 364 individuals from prisons and detention facilities as of January 2026.[475] The Amnesty Law is aimed at easing pressure on an overcrowded prison system, including inmates convicted of being members of ISIL.[476] Detainees are now be permitted to request retrials if they claim their confessions were obtained through torture or coercion while in custody[477] (see section 1.2.2 The General Amnesty Law).

In practice, individuals suspected of ISIL affiliation have been prosecuted on the basis of broad evidentiary standards. An Amnesty International report (October 2024) noted that accusations of ISIL affiliation were sometimes based on weak evidence, including family ties, personal disputes, or false allegations linked to property or land disputes, exposing individuals

[467] Iraq, Anti-Terrorism Law No. 13 of 2005, url
[468] Iraq, Law No. 3 of 2006 on Combating Terrorism, url
[469] MENA Rights Group, Civil and political rights in Iraq since the 2019 Tishreen protests: Universal Periodic Review of Iraq, 13 August 2024, url; 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
[470] 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
[471] 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
[472] MENA Rights Group, Civil and political rights in Iraq since the 2019 Tishreen protests: Universal Periodic Review of Iraq, 13 August 2024, url
[473] HRW, World Report 2025, 16 January 2025, url
[474] HRW, Iraq: Alleged ISIS Detainees Transferred from Syria at Risk of Abuse, 17 February 2026, url; EEAS, Iraq: Statement by the Spokesperson on the executions, 27 September 2024 url; HRW, Iraq: Surging Unlawful Executions, 19 November 2024, url
[475] Rudaw, Iraq releases over 41,300 inmates under amnesty law: Judiciary, url, 3 February 2026, url; EPIC, ISHM, ISHM: January 29 – February 5, 2026, 5 February 2026, url
[476] Al Jazeera, Iraq frees over 19,000 prisoners under new amnesty, including some ex-ISIL, 13 May 2025, url
[477] Al Jazeera, Iraq frees over 19,000 prisoners under new amnesty, including some ex-ISIL, 13 May 2025, url

and families to legal and financial consequences.[478] Concerns were expressed regarding the reliability of security databases and the possibility of erroneous identification.[479]

(b) Transfer of ISIL detainees from northeastern Syria to Iraq

Iraqi authorities have also carried out large-scale detention and prosecution[480] of individuals suspected of ISIL affiliation, including individuals transferred from detention facilities in northeastern Syria.[481] Following the closure of Al-Hol camp in northeastern Syria in February 2026,[482] thousands of ISIL detainees were transferred from Syrian detention facilities to Iraq for investigation and prosecution under Iraqi law.[483] Between January and February 2026, the US, under Operation Inherent Resolve, transferred more than 5 700 alleged ISIL detainees from detention facilities in northeastern Syria to Iraq,[484] at the request of the Iraqi authorities,[485] to ensure that they remain in secure detention facilities and to reduce the risk of instability.[486] Among them, 157 minors were transferred and placed in rehabilitation centres.[487] By May 2026, the Iraqi government had received almost 6 000 detainees transferred from Syria.[488] The transferred detainees consisted exclusively of male ISIL-affiliated fighters and suspects from approximately 60 nationalities, rather than women and children.[489] They therefore constituted a distinct population from the civilian residents of Al-Hol camp, notably women and children,[490] who were repatriated from Al-Hol under Iraq's civilian repatriation programme[491] (see section 1.4.3. Return of persons with perceived affiliation to ISIL). Iraqi authorities stated that the detainees would be investigated and prosecuted before Iraqi courts.[492] The transferred detainees are held in Nasiriyah and Karkh prisons, with Iraq's Supreme Judicial Council conducting investigations through its Karkh terrorism court.[493] By

[478] AI, Iraq: People held in Al-Jed'ah Centre subjected to torture and enforced disappearance after arrests – new investigation, 29 October 2024, url
[479] UNIDIR, Reintegrating Iraqis returning home after conflict: lessons from variations between four communities, MEAC Findings Report 41, January 2025, url, pp. 28-30
[480] HRW, Northeast Syria: Camp Closures Leave Thousands Stranded, 23 February 2026, url
[481] Al Jazeera, More than 5,000 ISIL detainees transferred from Syria, says Iraqi ministry, 13 February 2026, url
[482] UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/61-62), 12 March 2026, url, para 98
[483] Al Jazeera, More than 5,000 ISIL detainees transferred from Syria, says Iraqi ministry, 13 February 2026, url
[484] HRW, Iraq: Alleged ISIS Detainees Transferred from Syria at Risk of Abuse, 17 February 2026, url; AP News, US Military Completes Transfer of 5,700 ISIS Detainees from Syria to Iraq, 13 February 2026, url; ISHM, ISHM: February 12 – 19, 2026, 19 February 2026, url
[485] Asharq Al Awsat, Iraq: A Proactive Approach to Preventing the Return of ISIS, 25 January 2026, url
[486] Asharq Al Awsat, US Transfers ISIS Detainees from Syria to Iraq, 22 January 2026, url; Asharq Al Awsat, Iraq: A Proactive Approach to Preventing the Return of ISIS, 25 January 2026, url
[487] National (The), Dozens of minors among ISIS prisoners transferred to Iraq from Syria, judiciary authorities say, 17 February 2026, url
[488] ICRC, ICRC president calls for sustained international engagement to prevent further military escalation in the Middle East during visit to Iraq [EN/AR], 12 May 2026, url
[489] Anonymous source, interview with EUAA, 26 June 2026
[490] NRC, Syria: Insecurity around Al Hol Camp forces suspension of critical aid services aid agencies warn, 24 January 2026, url; AI, Iraq: People held in Al-Jed'ah Centre subjected to torture and enforced disappearance after arrests – new investigation, 29 October 2024, url; AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2024, 29 April 2025, url; UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 7
[491] HRW, Iraq: Alleged ISIS Detainees Transferred from Syria at Risk of Abuse, 17 February 2026, url; ISHM, ISHM: February 12 – 19, 2026, 19 February 2026, url
[492] Asharq Al Awsat, Baghdad Says It Will Prosecute ISIS Militants Being Moved from Syria to Iraq, 25 January 2026, url
[493] Anonymous source, interview with EUAA, 26 June 2026

July 2026, Iraq had concluded investigation and accountability procedures for approximately 85 % of defendants.[494]

UN bodies have raised concerns regarding the security, legal status and future of transferred populations,[495] while international organisations have also expressed concerns that some transfers may be incompatible with the principle of non-refoulement.[496] Local NGOs and other organisations have reportedly been unable to access these individuals and have raised concerns regarding the lack of transparency surrounding their treatment. [497]

1.4.3. Return of persons with perceived affiliation to ISIL

Since 2021, the Iraqi authorities have implemented a large-scale policy to repatriate Iraqi nationals from camps in northeastern Syria,[498] primarily Al-Hol camp,[499] under the One UN Plan and the 'New Beginnings' framework.[500] Returnees are predominantly women and children,[501] although the population is very diverse.[502] While some individuals had relatives who were affiliated with ISIL, [503] others had travelled to Syria before 2014, fled to Syria after ISIL took control of their areas of origin, crossed the border during military operations to dislodge ISIL from Iraq, or arrived in Syria after the recapture of ISIL's remaining strongholds.[504] While some individuals have relatives who were affiliated with ISIL, many others are civilians who lived under ISIL control, had been displaced by the conflict, or had been exposed to extremist ideology without participating in violence.[505]

An anonymous source stated that, following the January 2026 clashes in northeastern Syria between Kurds and the Syrian authorities, the legal rehabilitation and repatriation program is no longer in place. Individuals and families may still return to Iraq, but they may do so only

[494] Rudaw, Iraq to begin trials of ISIS detainees transferred from Syria in August, 16 July 2026, url
[495] UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/61-62), 12 March 2026, url, para 98; HRW, Northeast Syria: Camp Closures Leave Thousands Stranded, 23 February 2026, url; Charbord, A., Ní Aoláin KC F., A Legal Black Hole: Does Iraq Have the Right to Detain Prisoners Transferred from Syria?, Just Security, 11 February 2026, url
[496] UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/61-62), 12 March 2026, url, para 98; HRW, Northeast Syria: Camp Closures Leave Thousands Stranded, 23 February 2026, url; Charbord, A., Ní Aoláin KC F., A Legal Black Hole: Does Iraq Have the Right to Detain Prisoners Transferred from Syria?, Just Security, 11 February 2026, url
[497] Anonymous source, interview with EUAA, 26 June 2026
[498] BBC, Briefing: UN, Iraq urge speedy repatriation of IS-linked individuals from Syria, 27 September 2025, url
[499] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 7
[500] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 7
[501] NRC, Syria: Insecurity around Al Hol Camp forces suspension of critical aid services aid agencies warn, 24 January 2026, url; AI, Iraq: People held in Al-Jed'ah Centre subjected to torture and enforced disappearance after arrests – new investigation, 29 October 2024, url; AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2024, 29 April 2025, url; UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 7
[502] ICCT, Case Management of Iraqi Adult Returnees in al-Amal: Drawing Lessons from Comparable Contexts, February 2026, url
[503] ICCT, Case Management of Iraqi Adult Returnees in al-Amal: Drawing Lessons from Comparable Contexts, February 2026, url
[504] IOM, Mental Health and Psychosocial Needs Assessment Report, Al-Jad'aa - 1 Camp, August 2021, url, p. 5
[505] ICCT, Case Management of Iraqi Adult Returnees in al-Amal: Drawing Lessons from Comparable Contexts, February 2026, url

through irregular/illegal channels.[506] Between May 2021 and February 2026, more than 21 500 Iraqi nationals returned from the Al-Hol and Al-Roj camps to Iraq through 35 organised movements, prior to the closure of Al-Hol.[507] The Iraqi government subsequently stopped receiving further Iraqi families linked to ISIL from Al-Hol in April 2026. According to Iraqi security sources, any future returns would require official coordination with the Syrian authorities and a new agreement governing the transfer mechanism.[508] The Al-Amal Rehabilitation Centre in Iraq, however, continued to accommodate and rehabilitate returnees who had already been transferred from northeastern Syria.[509]

Upon return to Iraq, repatriated individuals generally undergo security screening[510] conducted by the National Security Service,[511] including interviews and biometric checks against security databases. Persons identified during the screening process may be arrested or investigated under Iraq's Anti-Terrorism Law.[512] Concerns were expressed regarding the reliability of security databases and the possibility of erroneous identification.[513] Some Iraqis return from northeastern Syria through informal or tribal channels, bypassing the official repatriation process. These individuals generally do not benefit from the formal reception and reintegration framework and may face increased legal, documentation and protection challenges.[514]

After screening,[515] returnees are generally transferred to the al-Amal (Hope) Centre for Psychological and Social Rehabilitation in Ninewa Governorate,[516] (formerly known as Jeddah 1).[517] The centre provides temporary residential rehabilitation and reintegration support,[518] including psychosocial assistance, legal counselling, education, vocational training,

[506] Anonymous source, interview with EUAA, 26 June 2026
[507] UNHCR, Civil Documentation opens doors for Iraqi nationals returning from North-East Syria, 6 July 2026, url
[508] Shafaq News, Iraq halts return of families from Al-Hol camp, 24 April 2026, url; Shafaq News, 1K+ Iraqis yet to return after Al-Hol closure, 16 September 2026, url
[509] UNHCR, Civil Documentation opens doors for Iraqi nationals returning from North-East Syria, 6 July 2026, url
[510] UNIDIR, Reintegrating Iraqis returning home after conflict: lessons from variations between four communities, MEAC Findings Report 41, January 2025, url, pp. 28-30
[511] USIP, Iraq's Lingering ISIS Challenge and the Role of Dialogue in Return and Reintegration, 21 November 2024, url
[512] UNIDIR, Reintegrating Iraqis returning home after conflict: lessons from variations between four communities, MEAC Findings Report 41, January 2025, url, pp. 28-30
[513] UNIDIR, Reintegrating Iraqis returning home after conflict: lessons from variations between four communities, MEAC Findings Report 41, January 2025, url, pp. 28-30
[514] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 7
[515] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 5; K. Palani, 'Life After Hope': Integration Experiences of Families Returning from Al-Hol to Iraq, 7 October 2025, https://peacerep.org/2025/10/10/life-after-hope/; NRC, NRC's operations in Iraq, Humanitarian overview, Factsheet May 2025, url; UNIDIR, From Al Hol to hope: Navigating return and reintegration challenges, 15 August 2024, url, pp. 8-9; UN in Iraq, UNAMI, For Iraq 2024, 10 June 2025, url, p. 11
[516] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 5; K. Palani, 'Life After Hope': Integration Experiences of Families Returning from Al-Hol to Iraq, 7 October 2025, url ; NRC, NRC's operations in Iraq, Humanitarian overview, Factsheet May 2025, url; UNIDIR, From Al Hol to hope: Navigating return and reintegration challenges, 15 August 2024, url, pp. 8-9; UN in Iraq, UNAMI, For Iraq 2024, 10 June 2025, url, p. 11
[517] Amnesty International, Iraq: People held in Al-Jed'ah Centre subjected to torture and enforced disappearance after arrests – new investigation, 29 October 2024, url
[518] ICCT, Case Management of Iraqi Adult Returnees in al-Amal: Drawing Lessons from Comparable Contexts, February 2026, url

and preparation for return to communities of origin,[519] support for obtaining civil documentation.[520] The programme is officially intended to last between three and six months, although some individuals reportedly remain at the centre for longer periods because of administrative delays, documentation problems or other protection concerns.[521]

By September 2025, more than 12 500 returnees had completed the rehabilitation programme and returned to Iraqi communities.[522] As repatriations accelerated during 2025, the centre reportedly operated at or near full capacity.[523] As of May 2026, around 5 000 people remained inside al-Amal Centre for Rehabilitation. The rest have already left, returning either to their areas of origin or settling in other parts of the country.[524] According to an anonymous source, all those remaining inside the centre are expected to leave the camp by the end of the year. However, the same source noted that 'many will face significant difficulties upon departure, including problems with documentation and an inability to support themselves, given the lack of income opportunities. Security concerns are not a major issue for most, but the stigma associated with lacking proper documents remains substantial.'[525]

Obtaining civil documentation remained one of the principal obstacles to the reintegration of returnees,[526] particularly for those returning from northeast Syria.[527] Many returnees, especially children born under ISIL control[528] or during displacement,[529] lacked birth certificates or other civil status documents required to access education, healthcare, social protection, employment and freedom of movement.[530] Despite government efforts to restore civil registry services and advance digitalisation, administrative and legal barriers to obtaining identity documents persisted, increasing the risk of statelessness and other protection concerns, particularly for children formerly associated with armed groups, female-headed households, and returnees processed through the Al-Amal Center. [531] Documentation challenges disproportionately affect female-headed households, children,[532] women whose husbands are

[519] UN in Iraq, UNAMI, For Iraq 2024, 10 June 2025, url, p. 11
[520] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 5
[521] K. Palani, 'Life After Hope': Integration Experiences of Families Returning from Al-Hol to Iraq, 7 October 2025, url
[522] BBC, Briefing: UN, Iraq urge speedy repatriation of IS-linked individuals from Syria, 27 September 2025, url
[523] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 7
[524] Anonymous source, interview with EUAA, 26 June 2026
[525] Anonymous source, interview with EUAA, 26 June 2026
[526] K. Palani, 'Life After Hope': Integration Experiences of Families Returning from Al-Hol to Iraq, 7 October 2025, url; ILHR), Reclaiming Identity: Strategies for Civil Documentation in Iraq, 2024, url, p. 17; UNICEF, Country Report – Iraq, February 2026, url, pp. 12-13; Arab Weekly (The), Iraqi returnees from Syria's al-Hol camp face uphill task reintegrating society, 14 July 2025, url
[527] UNICEF, Country Report – Iraq, February 2026, url, pp. 12-13
[528] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 5
[529] UNICEF, Country Report – Iraq, February 2026, url, pp. 12-13
[530] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 5
[531] UNICEF, Country Report – Iraq, February 2026, url, pp. 12-13
[532] UNIDIR, From Al Hol to hope: Navigating return and reintegration challenges, 15 August 2024, url, p. 9; UNICEF, Iraq – Highlights, url, p. 3

missing or accused of ISIL affiliation,[533] and individuals returning through informal channels.[534] Although the Al-Amal Centre assists returnees in initiating documentation procedures, individuals returning through informal channels remain at heightened risk of lacking civil documentation, thereby limiting their freedom of movement and exacerbating socio-economic vulnerability.[535] Female-headed households at the Al-Amal Rehabilitation Centre continued to face difficulties accessing information on their legal rights and available assistance.[536] Women and girl returnees, including those supported through the Centre, also encountered barriers to accessing essential services due to community stigma, safety concerns, and the limited availability of services.[537]

Despite these reintegration measures, returnees continue to face significant protection challenges. Persons returning from Al-Hol frequently experience discrimination,[538] pervasive stigma,[539] and social exclusion because of their perceived or actual association with ISIL,[540] regardless of their individual circumstances or level of involvement with the group.[541] Community acceptance reportedly varies across Iraq, with stronger resistance observed in areas that experienced prolonged ISIL control, including parts of Anbar and Ninewa governorates.[542] Communal stigma has, in some cases, compelled families, particularly female-headed households, to conceal their identities or relocate to unfamiliar areas to avoid discrimination.[543] In addition to social stigma, returnees often encounter damaged housing, limited livelihood opportunities, inadequate public services and continuing economic hardship.[544]

To facilitate reintegration, the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, together with local authorities, community councils and tribal leaders, has implemented reconciliation and social cohesion initiatives intended to support the return of families perceived to have links to ISIL.[545] Based on recent fieldwork including Fallujah and Mosul involving 40 women returnees, an anonymous source stated that most of those who left the centre were unable to return to their homes in their areas of origin, as they were not welcomed back by their communities and

[533] NRC, Legal Guide to Child's Rights in Iraq, November 2024, url, p. 20
[534] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 7
[535] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 5
[536] UNSC, Letter dated 23 December 2025 from the representatives of Denmark, Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, S/2025/84, 23 December 2025, url, p. 6
[537] UNSC, Letter dated 23 December 2025 from the representatives of Denmark, Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, S/2025/84, 23 December 2025, url, p. 6
[538] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 209
[539] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 209
[540] ICCT, Case Management of Iraqi Adult Returnees in al-Amal: Drawing Lessons from Comparable Contexts, February 2026, url
[541] UN Women, Understanding the lives of the women, men and children of Al Hol camp, 2025, url, p. 123
[542] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 10
[543] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 209
[544] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 209
[545] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 10

tribes. In many cases, their homes had been destroyed, with no jobs left, and their social ties had been severed.[546]

Women with perceived links to ISIL face additional legal and administrative obstacles.[547] In practice, many women whose husbands are alleged to have been affiliated with ISIL are required to complete the *tabriya* (denunciation)[548] or *ikhbar* (notification)[549] process before obtaining security clearance or civil documentation for themselves and their children.[550] Although these procedures have no explicit basis in Iraqi legislation and are applied inconsistently across jurisdictions, women are increasingly required to undergo them in order to formally renounce their spouse and deny any personal involvement with ISIL.[551] Human rights organisations reported that these practices may reinforce stigma, prolong legal uncertainty and delay access to documentation and public services.[552] Women whose husbands are missing or whose children's paternity cannot readily be established may also be required to undergo additional judicial procedures, including DNA testing, increasing the risk of prolonged administrative exclusion.[553]

An anonymous source reported that returnees from Al-Hol and Al-Amal experience restrictions to their freedom of movement for specific locations. In Shirqat (Salah Al Din governorate), for instance, they are permitted to return only to designated neighbourhoods and areas where they can be monitored. Each time they pass through a checkpoint, they are required to present identification. Many do not possess official identity documents and instead carry documentation indicating that they are returnees from Al-Hol or Al-Amal, identifying them as families associated with ISIL. Consequently, they are frequently identified as such at checkpoints and questioned about their destinations.[554] 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.

1.5 Palestinians in Iraq

Iraq falls outside the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA); therefore, the protection of Palestinian refugees in Iraq is under the jurisdiction of the Iraqi Government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).[555] The Palestinian population in Iraq has significantly declined since 2003.[556] As of

[546] Anonymous source, interview with EUAA, 26 June 2026
[547] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 20 May 2026, para 35 (a), url; AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 209
[548] NRC, Legal Guide to Child's Rights in Iraq, November 2024, url, p. 20
[549] NRC, Legal Guide to Child's Rights in Iraq, November 2024, url, p. 20
[550] NRC, Legal Guide to Child's Rights in Iraq, November 2024, url, pp. 13-14, 20
[551] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 20 May 2026, para 35 ©, url
[552] UNIDIR, Reintegrating Iraqis Returning Home After Conflict: Lessons from Variation Between Four Communities, January 2025, url, p. 31
[553] NRC, Legal Guide to Children's Rights in Iraq, November 2024, url, p. 26; ILHR, Reclaiming Identity: Strategies for Civil Documentation in Iraq, 2024, url, pp. 18-19
[554] Anonymous source, interview with EUAA, 26 June 2026
[555] Boston University, The Campaign to end statelessness in Iraq - حملة إنهاء حالات انعدام الجنسية في العراق , March 2022, url, p. 42; Stateless Journeys, Statelessness in Iraq, Country Position Paper, November 2019, url, pp. 15-16
[556] New Arab (The), Palestinian refugees in Iraq deprived of right to 'own taxis', 15 November 2024, url

July 2026, a total of 13 945 Palestinian individuals were registered with the Permanent Committee for Refugee Affairs of the Ministry of Interior (PC-MoI). Of those registered with PC-MoI, 6 447 Palestinians were also registered with UNHCR (as of July 2026), including Palestinian refugees who arrived from Syria since 2011. The majority of Palestinians refugees reside in Baghdad, particularly in Al-Baladiyyat neighborhood, with a smaller population residing in the KRI.[557] In the KRI, UNHCR registered 827 Palestinians in Erbil, 58 in Sulaymaniyah, and 9 in Dohuk as of July 2026.[558] Most Palestinians in the KRI hold the PC-MoI card, often expired due to a lack of PC-MoI missions to the KRI, and the UNHCR certificate.[559] In the KRI, since 2021, Palestinian refugees who entered the KRI from Federal Iraq in an irregular manner during the conflict with ISIL were given the possibility, subject to prescribed conditions,[560] to regularise their stay through Personal Identification Cards (PICs).[561]

Under the 2006 Nationality Law, Palestinian refugees are excluded from naturalisation 'as a guarantee to their right to return to their homeland',[562] and therefore cannot acquire Iraqi citizenship.[563] In 2017, [564] Decree No. 202 of 2001, which had granted Palestinians rights broadly equivalent to those of Iraqi citizens,[565] including access to public-sector employment and trade-union membership, [566] was repealed.[567] Its repeal resulted in their legal status no longer being (near) equivalent to that of Iraqi citizens.[568] This shift created legal uncertainty and reportedly led to inconsistent practices, including loss of employment and trade-union membership for some Palestinians.[569] In 2008, the PC-MoI undertook the registration of

[557] UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 17 August 2026
[558] UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 17 August 2026
[559] UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 17 August 2026; On 26 April 2026, UNHCR introduced a joint registration procedure with the Permanent Committee for Refugee Affairs of the Ministry of Interior (PC-MoI) for asylum-seekers in the Centre and South, Kirkuk and Ninewa governorates. Under the procedure, UNHCR conducts the initial registration and refers asylum-seekers to the PC-MoI for government registration and documentation. First-time registrants receive a reference slip from UNHCR and an appointment with the PC-MoI to submit their asylum application. While registration is conducted by both UNHCR and the PC-MoI, only the PC-MoI issues official documentation confirming the individual's status as an asylum-seeker in Iraq; a separate UNHCR certificate is not issued. The procedure aims to improve access to government registration and documentation while gradually reducing reliance on UNHCR-issued certificates; UNHCR, Iraq Update April 2026, 1 June 2026, url
[560] The conditions for Palestinian refugees who entered the KRI irregularly from Federal Iraq during the conflict with ISIL to regularise their stay are the following: (a) having been born in Iraq; (b) holding a UNHCR certificate; (c) holding a support letter from the Consulate General of the State of Palestine in Erbil; and (d) obtaining security and medical clearance.; UNHCR, email to EUAA, 17 August 2026
[561] Formerly known as the Humanitarian Residency Permit (HRP), UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025
[562] Art. 6 (2) reads as follows: 'Iraqi nationality shall not be granted to Palestinians as a guarantee to their right to return to their homeland.', Iraq, Iraqi Nationality Law, Law 26 of 2006, 7 March 2006, url, art. 6 (2); UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025
[563] UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025
[564] Iraq: Law on the Residence of Foreigners (2017), url
[565] Iraq, Resolution by the Revolutionary Command Council on the Treatment of Palestinians Permanently Residing in Iraq as Iraqis (2001), 24 September 2001, url; New Arab (The), Palestinian refugees in Iraq deprived of right to 'own taxis', 15 November 2024, url
[566] UNHCR, email to EUAA, 6 August 2025
[567] Iraq, Resolution by the Revolutionary Command Council on the Treatment of Palestinians Permanently Residing in Iraq as Iraqis (2001), 24 September 2001, url; New Arab (The), Palestinian refugees in Iraq deprived of right to 'own taxis', 15 November 2024, url
[568] UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025
[569] UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025; New Arab (The), Restrictions on Palestinians in Iraq to include lack of cooking gas access, 23 April 2026, url

Palestinian refugees[570] who were recognised as *prima facie* refugees and were issued national ID cards.[571] ID cards can be distinguished from those issued to Iraqi nationals,[572] making Palestinians easily identifiable as refugees.[573] However, Iraq does not have a comprehensive legal framework governing the status and protection of refugees in line with relevant international standards.[574] Issued by the Ministry of Interior, ID cards are valid for a period of five years for those arrived in 1948 and three years for those arrived in 1967 and subsequently.[575] Palestinians not registered as refugees with PC-MoI have regularised their stay with the Residency Directorate based on, for example, a work or family visa.[576]

Holders of PC-MoI documentation generally have access to public education, healthcare, the Public Distribution System (PDS), and rental housing. [577] However, Palestinians remain subject to restrictions applicable to non-citizens, including the prohibition on the ownership of immovable property.[578] Under Article 23(3)(A) of the Constitution of the Republic of Iraq, non-Iraqis are generally prohibited from owning immovable property in Iraq, subject to exceptions established by law.[579] This restriction applies equally to Palestinians.[580]

In the KRI, the Ministry of Interior of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), issued a new directive permitting foreigners who purchase qualifying residential property to obtain renewable residency permits, subject to conditions including a minimum property value of USD 50 000, location within licensed investment projects, and prior security and ministerial approval. UNHCR considered the measure to fall within the exception provided under Article 23(3)(A) and to be based on the KRG's broader legal framework governing foreign investment and real estate ownership, reportedly including Articles 154–158 of Real Estate Registration Law No. 43 of 1971, subject to the principle of reciprocity.[581] The Federal Supreme Court, in Decision No. 160 of 25 July 2023, confirmed that Palestinians permanently residing in Iraq are not permitted to own immovable property. The Court's decisions are final and binding on all authorities. However, UNHCR noted that it was not aware of any Federal Supreme Court decision declaring the KRG directive unconstitutional. It therefore remained unclear what the situation of Palestinians in the KRI was and whether they were legally authorised to own property under it.[582] In addition, a directive that entered into force in 2024 prohibited Palestinian refugees from owning taxis, which had previously been an important source of

[570] UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025; Boston University, The Campaign to end statelessness in Iraq - حملة إنهاء حالات انعدام الجنسية في العراق , March 2022, url, p. 43
[571] UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025
[572] Boston University, The Campaign to end statelessness in Iraq - حملة إنهاء حالات انعدام الجنسية في العراق , March 2022, url, p. 43; UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025
[573] UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 17 August 2026
[574] UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 17 August 2026
[575] UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 17 August 2026; USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 23 April 2024, url, p. 41
[576] UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025;
[577] UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 11 August 2026
[578] UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 11 August 2026; USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 23 April 2024, url, p. 41
[579] Article 23/3/A reads as follows: "Every Iraqi shall have the right to own property anywhere in Iraq. No others may possess immovable assets, except as exempted by law.", Iraq, Constitution of the Republic of Iraq, 15 October 2005, url; UNHCR, email to EUAA, 11 August 2026
[580] UNHCR, email to EUAA, 11 August 2026
[581] UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 11 August 2026
[582] UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 11 August 2026

income for many Palestinians.[583] In April 2026, Palestinians in Baghdad also reported being unable to obtain subsidised cooking gas cylinders because distribution required presentation of the Iraqi national card, which Palestinians are not eligible to obtain.[584]

At the political level, Iraq has continued to express support for Palestinian refugees. In January 2026, Iraq and UNRWA signed a three-year strategic partnership agreement (2026–2028), under which Iraq committed USD 30 million to support UNRWA's operations in Gaza, the West Bank, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan.[585] In October 2025, the Embassy of the State of Palestine in Iraq distributed one-off rental assistance to 300 vulnerable Palestinian refugee families and stated that it continued to engage with the Iraqi authorities on measures to improve the residency conditions of Palestinians in Iraq.[586]

Following ISIL's defeat, and the relative improvements in the security situation in most parts of Iraq, UNHCR did not report major incidents targeting Palestinians since 2019. Palestinians generally face the same challenges as the broader population, including issues related to security, human rights, and weak rule of law.[587]

Socio-economic conditions remain difficult. Palestinians reportedly experience deprivation of basic necessities and daily needs as a result of not holding Iraqi nationality.[588] The suspension of international aid has further worsened their economic situation.[589] Palestinians continue to face unemployment,[590] and overcrowded housing,[591] while access to services depends largely on possession of valid PC-MoI documentation.[592] As in the rest of the population, the availability and quality of such services may vary by area and may be inconsistent, poor, or entirely lacking.[593]

Freedom of movement within Federal Iraq can be restricted for Palestinians with expired ID cards. ID cards are not always recognised or respected at security checkpoints, especially outside Baghdad, further limiting their freedom of movement. UNHCR observed that many Palestinian refugees fear harassment and abuse when crossing checkpoints operated by the PMF.[594] Exit from and re-entry into Iraq are subject to specific documentation and approval requirements,[595] although the implementation of the relevant rules is not always clear or consistent in practice.[596] To leave Iraq, Palestinians who arrived in 1948 must obtain a travel document from the Residence Affairs Directorate of the Ministry of Interior, while others must use a Palestinian passport issued by the Embassy of Palestine in Baghdad. Travel documents

[583] New Arab (The), Palestinian refugees in Iraq deprived of right to 'own taxis', 15 November 2024, url
[584] New Arab (The), Restrictions on Palestinians in Iraq to include lack of cooking gas access, 23 April 2026, url
[585] UN, Iraq and UNRWA Sign Multi-Year Strategic Partnership Agreement, 22 January 2026, url
[586] Sada News, Palestine Embassy in Iraq Distributes "Rent Compensation" Grant to 300 Refugee Families, 7 October 2025, url
[587] UNHCR, email to EUAA, 17 August 2026
[588] New Arab (The), Restrictions on Palestinians in Iraq to include lack of cooking gas access, 23 April 2026, url
[589] New Arab (The), Restrictions on Palestinians in Iraq to include lack of cooking gas access, 23 April 2026, url
[590] UNHCR, email to EUAA, 17 August 2026
[591] UNHCR, email to EUAA, 17 August 2026
[592] UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 17 August 2025; USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 23 April 2024, url, p. 41
[593] UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 17 August 2026
[594] UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 17 August 2026
[595] Norway, Landinfo, Irak: Ut- og innreise for palestinere i Irak, 12 November 2025, url, p. 5
[596] Norway, Landinfo, Irak: Ut- og innreise for palestinere i Irak, 12 November 2025, url, pp. 2, 5, 7

issued by the Residence Affairs Directorate are valid for one year and permit re-entry into Iraq.[597] Palestinians who remain outside Iraq for more than 30 days reportedly risk losing their refugee status.[598] In such a case, upon return, they must obtain an entry visa and re-apply for asylum with the PC-MoI.[599]

1.6. Women and girls

1.6.1. Legal and social status

Iraq has been a party to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) since 1986[600] and constitutionally prohibits family abuse.[601] Moreover, Iraq's 2005 Constitution provides that all Iraqis are equal before the law and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.[602] However, it also establishes Islam as a fundamental source of legislation and stipulates that no law may be enacted that contradicts its 'established rulings'. [603] In addition, Article 41 allows each religious group to regulate its own personal status matters[604] and as a result, the legal situation of women in Iraq vary depending on the application of Islamic law and the interpretations and priorities of male-led religious authorities.[605] Despite the constitutional prohibition of violence, Iraqi family laws contain multiple gender-discriminatory provisions.[606] Iraq's Penal Code permits corporal punishment by husbands, allows reducing of sentences for honour killings,[607] and allows perpetrators of rape to escape prosecution by marrying their victims.[608] Legal protection and support services for survivors continued to be limited.[609] Furthermore, a February 2025 amendment to the Personal Status Law enables marriage contracts to fall under the Shia *Ja'afari* code,[610] effectively granting husbands superior rights over marriage, divorce, and child guardianship[611] (see section 1.2.1 Amendment on Personal Status Law and implementation of the *Ja'afari* Personal Status Code). Federal Iraq lacks a specific law criminalising violence against women,[612] with a domestic violence bill stalled for over a decade.[613] In the KRI, a law

[597] UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 17 August 2026
[598] UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 17 August 2026
[599] UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 17 August 2026
[600] UN OHCHR, UN Treaty Body Database, Ratification Status for Iraq, n.a., url
[601] HRW, Iraq: New Personal Status Code Makes Women Second Class, 15 October 2025, url
[602] Gadd, K., Ubeis, F., "I must care about the reputation of my family. This is very important to me": an exploration of factors affecting Iraqi women's access to justice, 12 April 2025, url, p. 8
[603] Gadd, K., Ubeis, F., "I must care about the reputation of my family. This is very important to me": an exploration of factors affecting Iraqi women's access to justice, 12 April 2025, url, pp. 4-5
[604] Article 41 reads: Iraqis are free in their commitment to their personal status according to their religions, sects, beliefs, or choices, and this shall be regulated by law', Iraq, Constitution of the Republic of Iraq, 15 October 2005, url, Art. 41
[605] Gadd, K., Ubeis, F., "I must care about the reputation of my family. This is very important to me": an exploration of factors affecting Iraqi women's access to justice, 12 April 2025, url, p. 8
[606] Musawah, Thematic Report on Muslim Family Law and Muslim Women's Rights in Iraq, February 2026, url, p. 6
[607] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2025, 21 April 2026, url
[608] HRW, World Report 2026; Iraq, 4 February 2026, url
[609] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url
[610] HRW, World Report 2026; Iraq, 4 February 2026, url
[611] HRW, World Report 2026; Iraq, 4 February 2026, url
[612] Equality Now, In Search of Justice: Rape laws in the Arab States, September 2025, url, p. 17
[613] HRW, World Report 2025 – Iraq, 16 January 2025, url

against domestic violence passed in 2011,[614] banning domestic violence, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation (FGM).[615] Both, Federal Iraq and KRI, have legislation to address trafficking in human beings, since 2012 and 2018, respectively.[616] IOHR documented at least 385 victims of trafficking in human beings in 2025; women and children were among the most affected groups.[617]

Women in Iraq face worsening conditions[618] driven by rising domestic violence,[619] widespread poverty,[620] digital targeting (such as via the Ballegh[621] platform,[622] particularly those perceived as defying 'traditional social expectations'[623]), and deep-rooted patriarchal legal and societal norms.[624] Women also faced discrimination,[625] societal stigma,[626] limited access to the labour market,[627] political marginalisation, and limited representation in decision-making bodies.[628] Despite constitutional and parliamentary gender quotas[629] (25 % in Federal Iraq[630] and 30 % in the KRI[631]) female political participation remains undermined by persistent threats, harassment,[632] and candidate disqualifications.[633] Furthermore, access to formal justice is limited[634] and severely restricted by weak law enforcement,[635] lack of legislation to address

[614] Rida, N., The Future of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Iraq, 12 April 2024, url; Equality Now, In Search of Justice: Rape laws in the Arab States, September 2025, url, p. 17
[615] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 27
[616] Mercy Path, Iraq's Protection Pathway - A Guide to Service Providers and Protection Capacity for Victims of Human Trafficking, 29 April 2026, url, p. 12
[617] IOHR, At least 385 victims of human trafficking in 2025, 19 July 2026, url
[618] New Arab (The), 'Darkest period yet': Once a regional leader, Iraq is now failing to protect its women, 13 January 2026, url; IOHR, The Systematic Erasure: Excluding Women from Iraq's Public Sphere, 8 March 2026, url
[619] CRC, Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Iraq, 18 July 2025, url, para. 26
[620] IFAD, Republic of Iraq, Country Strategy Note, 29 December 2024, url, pp. 10-11
[621] In January 2023, the Ministry of the Interior launched the Ballegh (بلّغ) online reporting platform, which enables members of the public to report allegedly offensive or degrading online content. See SMEX, Iraq's Controversial "Ballegh" Platform for "Combating Indecent Content", 15 February 2023, url
[622] SecDev Foundation (The), Digital Violence Against Women in Conflict Zones in the Middle East and North Africa, July 2025, url, p. 7; Kohl: a Journal for Body and Gender Research, The Spectre of Feminism in Post-October Iraq: on Political Absence and the Paralysis of Organising, 2025, url
[623] SecDev Foundation (The), Digital Violence Against Women in Conflict Zones in the Middle East and North Africa, July 2025, url, p. 7
[624] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 29; HRW, World Report 2026; Iraq, 4 February 2026, url; Hussain, S. F., Violence Against Women: Towards a Policy Understanding of the Patriarchy, 5 February 2025, url
[625] EFI, Violence Against Women and Girls in Iraq and The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Kr-I): Patterns, Causes, Awareness and Policy Responses National Study, October 2025, url, p. 17
[626] IOHR, The Systematic Erasure: Excluding Women from Iraq's Public Sphere, 8 March 2026, url; CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, paras. 43, 55
[627] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para; 43; IFAD, Republic of Iraq, Country Strategy Note, 29 December 2024, url, pp. 10-11
[628] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para 33; Shafaq News, Women's rights in Iraq: Marginalization and systemic challenges, 17 May 2024, url
[629] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para 33
[630] UNAMI, Fact sheet, Elections for Iraq's Council of Representatives, n.d., url. See also a study on effectiveness: Alkhudary, T., 'From the House to the Fire': The Gender Quota and Women's Substantive Representation in Iraq, 5 March 2024, url
[631] Iraq, Kurdistan Parliament, n.d., url
[632] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 33
[633] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2025, 21 April 2026, url
[634] HRW, World Report 2025 – Iraq, 16 January 2025, url
[635] IOHR, Iraq: Over 36 000 Domestic Violence Cases Recorded in 2025, 18 February 2026, url; ICSSI, Statement – An Urgent Call for Justice and Protection of Women and Girls in Iraq, 15 May 2026, url

gender-based violence against women and girls[636] and social status,[637] leaving abuses underreported[638] and frequently deferred to traditional tribal resolution mechanisms.[639] Comprehensive statistics on the prevalence of violence against women is not available due to underreporting,[640] fear of retaliation,[641] and stigma related to the risk of damaging the 'family honour'.[642]

1.6.2. Situation of unmarried, widowed, divorced women, and women without support network

Women in Iraq face severe economic exclusion and systemic marginalisation, resulting in one of the lowest female labour force participation rates in the MENA region[643] (11 % to 14 %),[644] high youth female unemployment (exceeding 28 %),[645] and a significant literacy gap compared to men.[646] The vast majority of employed women work in the public sector,[647] while those in informal labour are stripped of social security and pension benefits.[648] Women's financial independence is limited due to legal restrictions on property, inheritance, bank account access (only 20 % hold accounts),[649] and obstacles when registering businesses.[650] Female-headed households, widows and displaced women often cannot obtain civil documentation.[651] Some working women, including divorced women, experienced social stigma and their families prevented them from working.[652] These vulnerabilities are magnified for female-

[636] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 29; ICSSI, Statement – An Urgent Call for Justice and Protection of Women and Girls in Iraq, 15 May 2026, url
[637] Gadd, K., Ubeis, F., "I must care about the reputation of my family. This is very important to me": an exploration of factors affecting Iraqi women's access to justice, 12 April 2025, url, p. 8
[638] Al Juboori, R., Empowerment through technology: domestic violence acceptance among Iraqi women in an intersectional context, November 2024, url; EFI, Violence Against Women and Girls in Iraq and The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Kr-I): Patterns, Causes, Awareness and Policy Responses National Study, October 2025, url, pp. 8, 17; CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 29
[639] New Region (The), Thirty-eight year old woman found dead in Halabja: Police, 9 April 2025, url; Wadi, 8. March: A Woman Is Killed Every Five Days in the Kurdish Region of Iraq, 8 March 2026, url; KirkukNow, Kurdistan Region of Iraq: A Woman Is Killed Every Five Days, 8 March 2026, url
[640] EFI, Violence Against Women and Girls in Iraq and The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Kr-I): Patterns, Causes, Awareness and Policy Responses National Study, October 2025, url, pp. 8, 17, 69; CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 29
[641] EFI, Violence Against Women and Girls in Iraq and The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Kr-I): Patterns, Causes, Awareness and Policy Responses National Study, October 2025, url, pp. 8, 17
[642] New Region (The), Thirty-eight year old woman found dead in Halabja: Police, 9 April 2025, url
[643] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para 39, 43
[644] EFI, Violence Against Women and Girls in Iraq and The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Kr-I): Patterns, Causes, Awareness and Policy Responses National Study, October 2025, url, p. 18; Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2026 Country Report - Iraq, 2026, url, p. 26
[645] UNICEF Iraq, Country Report 2024, February 2025, url, p. 4
[646] Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2026 Country Report - Iraq, 2026, url, p. 26
[647] EFI, Violence Against Women and Girls in Iraq and The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Kr-I): Patterns, Causes, Awareness and Policy Responses National Study, October 2025, url, p. 18
[648] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para 39, 43
[649] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 43
[650] Kirkuk Now, War Forced Women to Become Breadwinners, but Government Support Remains Absent, Head of Nineveh's Women's Affairs Department, 4 August 2026, url
[651] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 35. See also: IOM and UNHCR, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq; As of March 2026, April 2026, url, p. 3
[652] DRC, JCI, Hawa Organisation, Double Burden The Lived Experiences of Displaced and Returnee Women in Iraq, 24 February 2025, url, pp. 2, 6-7; New Region – Basra (The), Decades of change; women in the grip of patriarchy, 8 March 2024, url

headed households (which comprise roughly 11 % of homes[653] and endure 30 % higher poverty rates),[654] widows, displaced women, and returnees (such as those from Syria's Al-Hol camp), who face pervasive social stigma, bureaucratic barriers,[655] and frequent lack of civil documentation.[656] In areas in Ninewa and Salah al-Din with many returns, female-headed households faced discrimination, harassment, and stigma, when trying to reintegrate.[657] While government welfare programs like the social welfare salary exist,[658] state protection services were poorly coordinated and insufficient,[659] routinely excluding women with unregistered marriages and forcing many to rely entirely on humanitarian aid or relatives for basic survival.[660] 'Widows, divorcees, and abandoned wives' in the meaning of the Social Protection Law have to provide proof of marriage to access social protection programs and benefits,[661] making it inaccessible for women who were married in unregistered marriages.[662] (See also section 2.3 Situation of the IDPs)

1.6.3. Violence against women and girls

(a) Domestic violence

Domestic violence against women and girls in Iraq is a widespread and escalating phenomenon,[663] driven by social stigma,[664] economic hardship,[665] and a lack of legislative protection.[666] Amnesty International found that women and girls have access to 'little redress and protection' from violence, including from femicides.[667] Women without formal education, younger women, women living in rural areas, women with disabilities,[668] and displaced women and girls[669] are disproportionately affected. Limited progress has been achieved, notably in

[653] Government of Iraq, Common core document forming part of the reports of States Parties; Iraq [11 April 2025], 3 October 2025, url, para. 8
[654] UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund Country programme document for Iraq, 5 December 2024, url, para. 3
[655] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2025, 21 April 2026, url
[656] IOM and UNHCR, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq; As of March 2026, April 2026, url, p. 3
[657] IRC, IRC Iraq Protection Needs Overview: Monitoring and Trends; April - September 2025, 20 January 2026, url, p. 5
[658] UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review; Iraq, 27 March 2025, url, para. 61; DRC, JCI, Hawa Organisation, Double Burden, The Lived Experiences of Displaced and Returnee Women in Iraq, 24 February 2025, url, p. 5
[659] UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund Country programme document for Iraq, 5 December 2024, url, para. 8
[660] DRC, JCI, Hawa Organisation, Double Burden, The Lived Experiences of Displaced and Returnee Women in Iraq, 24 February 2025, url, p. 5
[661] HRW, Marriage Without Safeguards: The Consequences of Iraq's Personal Status Code, 24 February 2026, url
[662] HRW, "My Marriage was Mistake after Mistake", The Impact of Unregistered Marriages on Women's and Children's Rights in Iraq, 3 March 2024, url
[663] New Arab (The), 'Darkest period yet': Once a regional leader, Iraq is now failing to protect its women, 13 January 2026, url; New Arab (The), Sharp rise in violence against women in Iraq amid calls for new anti-domestic violence law, 23 February 2026, url
[664] Hadi, B., Identifying factors influencing attitudes toward domestic violence in Iraq, October 2025, url
[665] Shafaq News, From love to bloodshed: Iraq's family violence epidemic, 31 July 2025, url
[666] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 29; AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2025, 21 April 2026, url; AI, Iraq: Government must chart a new course by ending impunity and upholding human rights, 17 August 2026, url
[667] AI, Iraq: Government must chart a new course by ending impunity and upholding human rights, 17 August 2026, url
[668] UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund Country programme document for Iraq, 5 December 2024, url, para. 7
[669] UNAMI, UN in Iraq marks 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women and Girls, 26 November 2024, url; UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund Country programme document for Iraq, 5 December 2024, url, para. 7

the awareness campaigns[670] and policy reforms.[671] According to a study on violence against women and girls published in December 2025, around half of women experienced some form of violence in the last six months.[672] Federal law fails to criminalise domestic violence[673] or marital rape,[674] while the Iraqi Penal Code explicitly allows husbands to physically discipline their wives and provides smaller sentences for violent acts, including killings, using 'honour' as a mitigating circumstance.[675] Most common forms of domestic violence were spousal physical[676] and psychological abuse.[677]

Iraqi Center for Human Rights reported that more than 53 000 cases of domestic violence were recorded between 2022 and the first half of 2024, primarily between spouses.[678] In 2025, IOHR recorded 36 289 cases of domestic violence (in 2024, 14 000 cases); the most common type of violence was violence by husbands against wives, representing 19 587 cases.[679] The real numbers for domestic violence are believed to be higher than the available statistics.[680] In 2025, Iraqi courts settled 11 635 domestic violence cases.[681] Places with high prevalence of domestic violence included al-Muthanna, Basra, Wasit, Thi Qar, Najaf, and Babil.[682] Despite legal protections in the KRI, implementation remains severely constrained by resources.[683] In KRI, local authorities recorded 12 456 cases of domestic violence in 2025, out of which 3 500 cases involved physical violence.[684] Most affected areas were Erbil, al-Sulaymaniyah, and Duhok.[685] In 2025, a court for domestic violence cases in al-Sulaymaniyah registered 4 703 cases.[686] On 12 February 2026, nine people accused of domestic violence were arrested in Kirkuk.[687]

[670] EFI, Violence Against Women and Girls in Iraq and The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Kr-I): Patterns, Causes, Awareness and Policy Responses National Study, October 2025, url, pp. 9, 30-31; New Arab (The), Sharp rise in violence against women in Iraq amid calls for new anti-domestic violence law, 23 February 2026, url; SecDev Foundation, Patchwork To Pathways: Learning to Support Iraqi Women Facing Digital Violence, 3 February 2026, url
[671] UNAMI, UN in Iraq marks 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women and Girls, 26 November 2024, url, p. 1; CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 5
[672] EFI, Fact Sheet: Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), December 2025, url , p. 3
[673] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2025, 21 April 2026, url; Maat, Maat for Peace' Report submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women regarding Iraq; January 2026, url, p. 1
[674] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 55
[675] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, paras. 15, 27
[676] New Arab (The), Sharp rise in violence against women in Iraq amid calls for new anti-domestic violence law, 23 February 2026, url
[677] Shafaq News, Psychological abuse claims two-fifths of Kurdistan's cases, 21 June 2026, url
[678] New Region (The), Iraq records over 50,000 domestic violence cases in past two and a half years, 1 October 2025, url
[679] IOHR, Iraq: Over 36 000 Domestic Violence Cases Recorded in 2025, 18 February 2026, url
[680] New Arab (The), Sharp rise in violence against women in Iraq amid calls for new anti-domestic violence law, 23 February 2026, url; IOHR, Iraq: Over 36 000 Domestic Violence Cases Recorded in 2025, 18 February 2026, url
[681] Junmar Media, [Instagram], posted on 6 February 2026, url
[682] Shafaq News, From love to bloodshed: Iraq's family violence epidemic, 31 July 2025, url
[683] CRC, Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Iraq, 18 July2025, url, para. 26
[684] Rudaw, Nearly 12,500 domestic violence complaints recorded in Kurdistan in 2025: Official, 5 May 2026, url
[685] Shafaq News, Kurdistan Region: +13K domestic violence cases in 2024, 28 June 2025, url
[686] Shafaq News, Psychological abuse claims two-fifths of Kurdistan's cases, 21 June 2026, url
[687] Shafaq News, Police arrest nine over domestic violence cases in Iraq's Kirkuk, 12 February 2026, url

Structural support for victims is largely absent; official shelters are absent in Federal Iraq, state facilities in the KRI are inadequate,[688] and NGOs face legal bans against operating independent shelters.[689] Sources indicate presence of some unofficial shelters;[690] at least one NGO is reported to operate shelters for survivors of violence 'across the country'.[691]

(b) Gender Based Violence (GBV) and sexual violence

Violence against women and girls in Iraq takes various forms including psychological abuse, abuse online, sexual violence, verbal and physical assaults, early and forced marriages, and financial exclusion,[692] and it has been on the rise.[693] Violence against women and girls remained widespread and there are no effective state mechanisms to protect women from GBV.[694] Societal attitudes concerning GBV continued to worsen in 2025[695] and women faced exclusion from public spaces.[696] Prevailing cultural norms, economic dependency of women on men, and a lack of legal protection all contributed to the high prevalence of spousal violence.[697] Violence against women and girls takes space in various settings, including at home (see section on Domestic violence), in public spaces, on the internet,[698] and in state institutions.[699] Women working in public sphere faced abuses, including harassment and threats.[700] Women were targeted in cyberviolence;[701] online GBV included harassment, cyberstalking, doxxing, and sharing of intimate pictures without consent.[702] Digital abuse has low prosecution rates[703] as both Federal Iraq and KRI lack an effective legal framework to combat online abuse[704] even though in 2008, KRI authorities passed Law No. 6 on Preventing the Misuse of New Information Technologies.[705] According to Iraqi authorities, there are 308

[688] Bobseine H., Senior Iraq researcher and analyst specializing on tribal affairs, Interview, 28-29 October 2024 and email communication to EUAA, 13 July 2025
[689] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para 31
[690] Equality Now, Yanar Mohammed was assassinated 100 days ago. No one has been charged., 10 June 2026, url; HRW, World Report 2026; Iraq, 4 February 2026, url
[691] Equality Now, Yanar Mohammed was assassinated 100 days ago. No one has been charged., 10 June 2026, url
[692] EFI, Violence Against Women and Girls in Iraq and The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Kr-I): Patterns, Causes, Awareness and Policy Responses National Study, October 2025, url, p. 28
[693] CRC, Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Iraq, 18 July 2025, url, para. 26; New Arab (The), 'Darkest period yet': Once a regional leader, Iraq is now failing to protect its women, 13 January 2026, url; CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para 29
[694] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 29
[695] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2025, 21 April 2026, url
[696] New Arab (The), 'Darkest period yet': Once a regional leader, Iraq is now failing to protect its women, 13 January 2026, url
[697] UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund Country programme document for Iraq, 5 December 2024, url, para. 7
[698] EFI, Violence Against Women and Girls in Iraq and The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Kr-I): Patterns, Causes, Awareness and Policy Responses National Study, October 2025, url, p. 9
[699] EFI, Violence Against Women and Girls in Iraq and The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Kr-I): Patterns, Causes, Awareness and Policy Responses National Study, October 2025, url, p. 17, 37
[700] IOHR, The Systematic Erasure: Excluding Women from Iraq's Public Sphere, 8 March 2026, url
[701] Kirkuk Now, 21% Experienced Cyberviolence: Silent Weapon Threatening Iraqi Women, 14 September 2025, url; MADR, The State of Digital Rights in Iraq: Collaborative Repression Between the Authorities and Technology Companies!, [March 2026], url; Le Monde diplomatique, Kurdish women's struggle for gender equality – and much else besides, 9 April 2026, url
[702] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para 29; GIZ, Routes to recovery Success stories from the reconstruction in Nineveh, Iraq, 2025, url, pp. 24-25
[703] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para 29
[704] SEED, Toward Safe Digital Spaces: The Importance of Legislation to Address Online Violence in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region (June 2025) - Iraq, 16 September 2025, available at: url, p. 8
[705] Le Monde diplomatique, Kurdish women's struggle for gender equality – and much else besides, 9 April 2026, url

registered NGOs in the country having women as their area of specialisation;[706] in practice, these NGOs faced restrictions.[707] Survivors of GBV had limited access to justice and shelters.[708] Instances of GBV have been further exacerbated by conflict and instability.[709] On 6 April 2026, a man killed his daughter in a 'family dispute'. The woman, who worked as a lawyer, died from her injuries in a hospital. The father turned himself in to the police.[710]

(c) Forced and unregistered marriage

Existing legal framework sets the legal age for marriage at 18,[711] or at 15 with judicial consent based on the child's 'maturity and physical capacity'.[712] UNICEF states that 28 % of women were married before age 18.[713] Forced marriages are officially banned but the law does not define what would constitute coercion.[714] The prevalence of forced marriages was at almost 11 %, including as a means to resolve conflicts or because of financial reasons; additionally, forced marriages have increased in a context of conflict-related displacement.[715] Unregistered marriages, also called temporary[716] or pleasure marriages (*nikah mut'ah*),[717] continued to be practiced.[718] Such temporary arrangements are reported to be widely misused for sexual exploitation,[719] trafficking,[720] and as a way to circumvent legal restrictions on child marriage.[721] Women in unregistered marriages cannot give birth in state hospitals and are not entitled to social benefits provided to widows, abandoned wives, and divorced women.[722] Women

[706] Government of Iraq, Common core document forming part of the reports of States Parties; Iraq [11 April 2025], 3 October 2025, url, p. 52
[707] ICNL, Civic Freedom Monitor: Iraq, 23 June 2026, url, p. 1
[708] HRW, World Report 2026; Iraq, 4 February 2026, url
[709] UNICEF, Identifying Opportunities for Coordination Between Violence Against Children and Violence Against Women Efforts in Iraq, December 2024, url, p. 4; EFI, Fact Sheet: Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), December 2025, url, p. 4; UN Women, Beyond the headlines: What the ongoing conflicts really mean for women and girls in the Middle East, 30 April 2026, url
[710] GCHR, GCHR's 37th Periodic Report on Human Rights Violations in Iraq, 14 April 2026, url
[711] HRW, Iraq: Personal Status Law Amendment Sets Back Women's Rights, 10 March 2025, url; UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para 64
[712] HRW, Iraq: Personal Status Law Amendment Sets Back Women's Rights, 10 March 2025, url; UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para 64; EFI, Violence Against Women and Girls in Iraq and The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Kr-I): Patterns, Causes, Awareness and Policy Responses National Study, October 2025, url, p. 21
[713] UNICEF, Country Profiles, Iraq, n.d., url
[714] EFI, Violence Against Women and Girls in Iraq and The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Kr-I): Patterns, Causes, Awareness and Policy Responses National Study, October 2025, url, p. 21
[715] EFI, Violence Against Women and Girls in Iraq and The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Kr-I): Patterns, Causes, Awareness and Policy Responses National Study, October 2025, url, pp. 62, 68
[716] Jad, I. et al., The State of Marriage in the Arab Mashreq: Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, and Lebanon, 30 November 2024, url, p. 140
[717] NLI, How Temporary Marriages Can Exploit Vulnerable Women in Iraq, 24 April 2025, url; NIRIJ-Daraj, "Pleasure Marriage:" Thinly Veiled Legal Prostitution, 24 March 2023, url
[718] AP News, Iraqi women fear rise in child marriages as lawmakers consider giving conservative clerics more say, 4 September 2024, url; Rudaw, 'Assault on childhood': UN condemns Iraqi bill potentially lowering marriage age, 12 November 2024, url; Allam, N. and Al Qaraghuli, B., The Politics of Personal Status Law in Egypt and Iraq, in: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 2025, url, p. 12
[719] HRW, Iraq: Personal Status Law Amendment Sets Back Women's Rights, 10 March 2025, url; CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq 20 May 2026, url para 27, 31
[720] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq 20 May 2026, url para 27, 31; NLI, How Temporary Marriages Can Exploit Vulnerable Women in Iraq, 24 April 2025, url
[721] EFI, Violence Against Women and Girls in Iraq and The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Kr-I): Patterns, Causes, Awareness and Policy Responses National Study, October 2025, url, p. 21; NLI, How Temporary Marriages Can Exploit Vulnerable Women in Iraq, 24 April 2025, url
[722] HRW, Marriage Without Safeguards: The Consequences of Iraq's Personal Status Code, 24 February 2026, url

without a civil marriage certificate are also unable to update their marital status on official identification documents, thereby restricting their access to basic services, including education, where access is linked to their registered marital status.[723] In rural areas, *mut'ah* and unregistered marriages occur 'at alarming rates'.[724] According to an UN report from 2021, 33.9 % of marriages in Iraq were unregistered, and 22 % of them involved girls younger than 14.[725] While these marriages are officially illegal, the Personal Status Law amendment of 2025 effectively legalised them, creating two parallel legal systems, where couples now can decide which framework will govern their marriage[726] (see section 1.2.1 Impact of the *Ja'afari* Personal Status Code on child marriage). *Mut'ah* have a higher prevalence in poorer families and since they are not officially registered, they do not provide any social security and rights to alimony and inheritance[727] (see section 1.7.5 on child marriage).

(d) Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)

In the KRI, following the passing of the Act of Combating Domestic Violence,[728] FGM has been banned since 2011, while Federal Iraq does not have any legislation specifically banning the practice.[729] The legislation in the KRI provides penalties up to three years in prison or a fine up to five million Iraqi dinars, or both.[730] Even though the legislation bans FGM in KRI, the courts have not dealt with any cases yet.[731] Religious beliefs, traditions, and concepts of family honour and purity have been mentioned as the reasons behind the practice.[732] The prevalence of FGM among Iraqi women varies significantly across the country;[733] the UN estimates it at 7-19 % among women aged 15–49.[734] Obtaining reliable and up-to-date data on the practice is challenging[735] and it is believed that FGM continues in secrecy.[736] KRI is particularly affected,[737] although the prevalence of the practice has decreased over the last decade;[738] nevertheless it remains 'part of a social system deeply rooted in family, religious and cultural structures'.[739] Despite significant efforts by Iraqi authorities to address FGM and a

[723] HRW, Marriage Without Safeguards: The Consequences of Iraq's Personal Status Code, 24 February 2026, url
[724] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq 20 May 2026, url para 27, 31
[725] HRW, Marriage Without Safeguards: The Consequences of Iraq's Personal Status Code, 24 February 2026, url
[726] HRW, Marriage Without Safeguards: The Consequences of Iraq's Personal Status Code, 24 February 2026, url
[727] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 43
[728] Rida, N., The Future of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Iraq, 12 April 2024, url
[729] WADI, More efforts to end FGM in Iraq needed, 5 February 2025, url
[730] New Arab (The), Girls as young as four subjected to FGM in Iraqi Kurdistan despite ban, NGOs warn, 8 February 2026, url; WADI, Combating FGM in Iraqi-Kurdistan means to deal with different realities in each region, 27 July 2025, url
[731] WADI, Female Genital Mutiliation (FGM) Progress, Gaps and the Way Forward, 2 February 2026, url
[732] Kirkuk Now, "Dull Razors" Violate Law, Threaten Women, 7 February 2026, url
[733] New Arab (The), Girls as young as four subjected to FGM in Iraqi Kurdistan despite ban, NGOs warn, 8 February 2026, url; WADI, Combating FGM in Iraqi-Kurdistan means to deal with different realities in each region, 27 July 2025, url
[734] UNFPA, Arab States/Middle East and North Africa, 2025 Regional Snapshot, June 2026, url, p. 3. UNICEF states 7 %. See: UNICEF, Country Profiles, Iraq, n.d., url
[735] WADI, Female Genital Mutiliation (FGM) Progress, Gaps and the Way Forward, 2 February 2026, url
[736] New Arab (The), Girls as young as four subjected to FGM in Iraqi Kurdistan despite ban, NGOs warn, 8 February 2026, url; WADI, Combating FGM in Iraqi-Kurdistan means to deal with different realities in each region, 27 July 2025, url
[737] UNICEF, A Statistical Overview of Female Genital Mutilation in Iraq, n.d., url, p. 1; HRE, Human Rights in Iraq: Analytical Report 2025-2026, 29 April 2026, url; Erbil has been reported as having the highest prevalence within both, Federal Iraq and KRI. See: Rida, N., The Future of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Iraq, 12 April 2024, url
[738] End FGM Network, Building a Sustainable Future for Survivors of FGM in Iraq, 10 November 2025, url
[739] Mena-Watch, "The work to combat female genital mutilation begins with trust", 16 May 2026, url

reported decline in its prevalence,[740] the practice reportedly continued to be 'quietly practised' in the KRI.[741] In 2025, the Association for Crisis Assistance and Development Cooperation (WADI) recorded 77 cases of FGM among girls under 10, of which three were in Erbil and 74 in Ranya, Sulaymaniyah province.[742] WADI stated that some areas in KRI are 'FGM-free', for example, Halabja Province, and Garmyan, including the districts of Kalar, Kifri, and Darbandikhan, in Sulaymaniyah.[743] CEDAW found that in rural areas of Iraq, FGM continues 'at alarming rate'.[744]

(e) Honour-based violence

Honour-based violence and honour killings *(ghasl al-a'ar)* in Iraq remain widespread[745] and ongoing issue in both Federal Iraq[746] and the KRI[747] sustained by deeply entrenched patriarchal and tribal customs,[748] legal loopholes,[749] and societal tolerance.[750] Haley Bobseine observed that honour killings 'are enabled by the Iraqi criminal law and there is not much interest in challenging these norms.'[751] Perpetrated primarily against women and girls by male relatives over perceived dishonour such as refusing forced marriages, pre-marital relationships, alleged sexual misconduct, or same-sex relations,[752] these crimes carry widespread impunity,[753] enabled by Penal Code provisions that mitigate sentences for honour motives[754] and by police treating them as private family matters[755] resolved through tribal mediation.[756] Honour killings may be covered up as suicides[757] (estimated up to 70 % of reported cases as of March 2025)[758] or accidents.[759] The true scale of the crisis remains

[740] UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund Country programme document for Iraq, 5 December 2024, url, para. 8
[741] WADI, Combating FGM in Iraqi-Kurdistan means to deal with different realities in each region, 27 July 2025, url
[742] WADI, Female Genital Mutiliation (FGM) Progress, Gaps and the Way Forward, 2 February 2026, url
[743] Kirkuk Now, "Dull Razors" Violate Law, Threaten Women, 7 February 2026, url
[744] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url para 27
[745] Bobseine H., Senior Iraq researcher and analyst specializing on tribal affairs, Interview, 28-29 October 2024 and email communication to EUAA, 13 July 2025
[746] HRE, Honour Killing in Iraq: Article 128 and Legal Protection of Killers, 29 April 2026, url
[747] IraqExpert, Honor Killings in the KRI, March 2026, url
[748] Hussain, S. F., Violence Against Women: Towards a Policy Understanding of the Patriarchy, 5 February 2025, url
[749] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2025, 21 April 2026, url; The New Region, Iraq records over 50,000 domestic violence cases in past two and a half years, 1 October 2025, url
[750] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 17; Kurdistan24, Outcry in Iraq Over Alleged Honor Killing of Teenage Girl Sparks Renewed Debate on Women's Protection, 13 May 2026, url; Hadi, B., Identifying factors influencing attitudes toward domestic violence in Iraq, October 2025, url
[751] Bobseine H., Senior Iraq researcher and analyst specializing on tribal affairs, Interview, 28-29 October 2024 and email communication to EUAA, 13 July 2025
[752] Bobseine H., Senior Iraq researcher and analyst specializing on tribal affairs, Interview, 28-29 October 2024 and email communication to EUAA, 13 July 2025
[753] Wadi, 8. March: A Woman Is Killed Every Five Days in the Kurdish Region of Iraq, 8 March 2026, url; OHCHR, Experts of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women []..., 4 February 2026, url; AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2025, 21 April 2026, url; KirkukNow, Kurdistan Region of Iraq: A Woman Is Killed Every Five Days, 8 March 2026, url
[754] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2025, 21 April 2026, url; The New Region, Iraq records over 50,000 domestic violence cases in past two and a half years, 1 October 2025, url
[755] HRE, Honour Killing in Iraq: A Family Decision the Police Don't Investigate, 30 April 2026, url
[756] HRE, Honour Killing in Iraq: Article 128 and Legal Protection of Killers, 29 April 2026, url
[757] New Region (The), Iraq records over 50,000 domestic violence cases in past two and a half years, 1 October 2025, url; ARIJ, The graveyards of "unknown women", 10 March 2025, url; Bobseine, H., Senior Iraq researcher and analyst specializing on tribal affairs, Interview, 29 October 2024, and email communication, 13 July 2025
[758] ARIJ, The graveyards of "unknown women", 10 March 2025, url
[759] ARIJ, The graveyards of "unknown women", 10 March 2025, url; IraqExpert, Honor Killings in the KRI, March 2026, url

unknown: underreporting,[760] unreliable official statistics,[761] and state restrictions on media coverage[762] leave victims underreported,[763] while state protection mechanisms are absent and NGOs face hostility.[764]

According to a former spokesperson for the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights interviewed by ARIJ[765] in March 2025, at least 150 women and girls are killed in Iraq in honour killings annually.[766] While there is no data available for Federal Iraq, and without explicitly specifying whether the cases were honour killings, authorities in the KRI reported on 53 women and girls being killed in 2025, mostly by their male relatives.[767] In 2025, media sources reported on various cases of women being killed by their male relatives in the KRI in suspected honour killings.[768] According to the March 8 Network,[769] 69 women were killed in the KRI in 2025, and 13 women in January-February 2026.[770] In May 2026, a 15-year-old girl trying to escape a forced marriage was shot dead in Baghdad by her father, uncle, and a cousin.[771] The girl's family and tribe were reportedly seen celebrating her killing in a video shared online.[772] (See also section 1.9 Individuals perceived as transgressing moral and Islamic norms)

1.7. Children

Iraq is party to several international treaties and agreements related to the rights of children, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), since 1994, as well as the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict since 2008, and the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography since 2008.[773] The laws protecting children's rights have still not been adopted neither in Federal Iraq, nor in the

[760] EFI, Violence Against Women and Girls in Iraq and The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Kr-I): Patterns, Causes, Awareness and Policy Responses National Study, October 2025, url, p. 17; OHCHR, Experts of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women []..., 4 February 2026, url; New Region (The), Iraq records over 50,000 domestic violence cases in past two and a half years, 1 October 2025, url
[761] HRE, Honour Killing in Iraq: Article 128 and Legal Protection of Killers, 29 April 2026, url
[762] Wadi, 8. March: A Woman Is Killed Every Five Days in the Kurdish Region of Iraq, 8 March 2026, url
[763] Rudaw, Iraqi man kills wife, reports her missing, 30 November 2025, url
[764] Bobseine H., Senior Iraq researcher and analyst specializing on tribal affairs, Interview, 28-29 October 2024 and email communication to EUAA, 13 July 2025
[765] ARIJ (Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism) is a non-profit organisation supporting investigative journalism in the Arab world, see ARIJ, Who we are, n.d., url
[766] ARIJ, The graveyards of "unknown women", 10 March 2025, url
[767] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2025, 21 April 2026, url
[768] Insight International (The), Man kills sister serving in Peshmerga forces in Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan, 12 January 2025, url; Insight International (The), Kurdish woman brutally killed by husband in Iraqi Kurdistan, 15 January 2025, url; Insight International (The), Sister killed by her brother in Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan, 23 May 2025, url
[769] The March 8 Network is a network of 30 organisations, including journalists and academics, established in 2022, to advocate for women's rights and for equality between women and men in the KRI. Workers' Liberty, Joint Statement on the Death of Ghazal Mawlan, 28 April 2026, url
[770] Wadi, 8. March: A Woman Is Killed Every Five Days in the Kurdish Region of Iraq, 8 March 2026, url
[771] Guardian (The), 'My 15-year-old relative was killed for refusing to marry her cousin. My family celebrated by dancing in the street', 1 June 2026, url
[772] Kurdistan24, Outcry in Iraq Over Alleged Honor Killing of Teenage Girl Sparks Renewed Debate on Women's Protection, 13 May 2026, url
[773] UN OHCHR, UN Treaty Body Database, Ratification Status for Iraq, n.a., url

KRI.[774] In June 2023, a draft child protection law was introduced to the Iraqi parliament but it has not passed.[775] According to Iraqi authorities, as of October 2025, the state was 'in the process of drafting a new children's law.'[776] In November 2025, the Prime Minister established a high-level interministerial legal committee to accelerate the passage of pending laws and policies related to children, such as the draft Child Rights Law and Juvenile Care Law.[777] In 2026, Iraq ranked 166th out of 194 countries in the Kids Rights Index, making it the 'worst performing country' in the MENA region.[778] According to Iraqi authorities, there are 375 registered NGOs in the country having children and orphans as their area of specialisation.[779]

Despite a constitutional prohibition on violence,[780] Iraq's Penal Code permits corporal punishment of children,[781] allowing parents and teachers to 'discipline' children.[782] In 2025, the Supreme Court ruling strictly banned all forms of violence against children, obligating courts and law enforcement to take action.[783] While laws prohibit sexual abuse, harassment, exploitation, and trafficking,[784] young victims faced high rates of exploitation and social stigmatisation, including within the legal system.[785] Violence against children remains widespread[786] and underreported and is believed to be on a rise.[787] In 2025, IOHR recorded 1 841 cases of domestic violence by parents against children.[788] According to the Iraqi authorities, in 2020, 23 children were murdered by their fathers; the government reportedly refused to publish more recent statistics.[789] Unofficial statistics indicate that some 12 % of children suffered domestic violence.[790] Girls remain vulnerable to domestic and sexual violence, while child marriage remains a critical issue that affects girls' education, health, and well-being.[791]

In the context of conflict-related violence, UNAMI documented five children's fatalities and 15 injuries from 1 April to 15 October 2025. In the period from 1 April to 30 June 2025, the country's task force on grave violations against children in armed conflict confirmed killing and

[774] CRC, Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Iraq, 18 July 2025, url
[775] HRW, World Report 2025 – Iraq, 16 January 2025, url
[776] Government of Iraq, Common core document forming part of the reports of States Parties; Iraq [11 April 2025], 3 October 2025, url, para. 133
[777] UNICEF Iraq, Country Report 2025, February 2026, url, p. 4
[778] Kids Rights, Overview of Middle East and North Africa, [2026], url. Kids rights is an international non-governmental organisation that promotes the wellbeing of vulnerable children across the world.
[779] Government of Iraq, Common core document forming part of the reports of States Parties; Iraq [11 April 2025], 3 October 2025, url, p. 52
[780] UNICEF, Identifying Opportunities for Coordination Between Violence Against Children and Violence Against Women Efforts in Iraq, December 2024, url, p. 10
[781] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2025, 21 April 2026, url; CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 15
[782] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 15
[783] OHCHR, Experts of the Committee on the Rights of the Child Praise Iraq's Child Rights Strategy, Raise Issues Concerning Child Marriage and Corporal Punishment, 16 May 2025, url
[784] NRC Legal Guide to Children's Rights in Iraq, November 2024, url, pp. 37-38
[785] CRC, Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Iraq, 18 July 2025, url, para. 26
[786] UNICEF Iraq, Country Report 2025, February 2026, url, p. 4; UNICEF, Identifying Opportunities for Coordination Between Violence Against Children and Violence Against Women Efforts in Iraq, December 2024, url, p. 4
[787] Shafaq News, Iraq reports 14,000 domestic violence cases in 2024; 6% child victims, 2 February 2025, url; Shafaq News, Police arrest nine over domestic violence cases in Iraq's Kirkuk, 12 February 2026, url
[788] IOHR, Iraq: Over 36 000 Domestic Violence Cases Recorded in 2025, 18 February 2026, url
[789] Shafaq News, From love to bloodshed: Iraq's family violence epidemic, 31 July 2025, url
[790] Shafaq News, From love to bloodshed: Iraq's family violence epidemic, 31 July 2025, url
[791] UNICEF Iraq, Country Report 2025, February 2026, url, p. 4

maiming of 20 children.[792] Moreover, children continued to be among the most vulnerable to the risk of weapon contamination.[793]

1.7.1. Child recruitment by armed groups

Minimum age of recruitment in Iraq is 18 years old; there is no military conscription. The same minimum age applies to armed groups operating in the country under the government's umbrella.[794] In April 2026, Iraqi media reported that a bill meant to reintroduce mandatory military service for men aged 18-45 is being discussed.[795]

In 2023, the Iraqi authorities and the UN signed an agreement to prevent the recruitment of children by the PMF.[796] In 2024, following the implementation of the agreement, Iraq was removed from the UN list of countries using child soldiers,[797] resulting in its absence in the annual UN Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in 2025.[798] Nevertheless, in 2024, the UN noted an increase of recruitment of children by other armed groups, mostly the HPG/PKK and ISIL, including for combat roles,[799] noting that many cases go unreported and cannot be verified.[800] More recent data could not be found among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this report. Despite the successful implementation of the agreement to prevent the recruitment and use of children by the PMF, child recruitment has not been criminalised.[801] In the context of recruitment, existence of extensive online content by armed groups aimed at children for this purpose has been identified in Iraq by an ICRC report.[802] In a report published in May 2026, CEDAW wrote that girls were recruited by ISIL and other non-state actors on social media platforms.[803]

1.7.2. Children with perceived affiliation to ISIL

Repatriation efforts for Iraqis linked to ISIL continued throughout 2025, bringing back families from Syria's Al-Hol camp, housing families linked to ISIL, to Ninewa province.[804] Out of over 11 000 returnees in 2025, more than 6 200 were children, including 289 who were

[792] UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024); Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, paras. 65-66
[793] ICRC, Buried Wars: Landmines Shatter Iraq's Childhood Dreams [EN/AR], 26 April 2026, url
[794] NRC, Legal Guide to Children's Rights in Iraq, [November 2024], url, p. 38
[795] Amwaj Media, Parliamentary push to bring back conscription ignites debate in Iraq, 28 April 2026, url; New Region (The), Maliki calls Iraq conscription bill 'outdated,' urges parliament to delay vote, 22 April 2026, url
[796] UN, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, The Government of Iraq, supported by the United Nations, strengthens its commitment to prevent the recruitment and use of children by armed forces, 30 March 2023, url
[797] Shafaq News, Iraq officially removed from UN list of countries using children in armed conflict, 14 June 2024, url
[798] UNGA, Security Council, Children and armed conflict, 16 June 2026, url. See also: UN, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Statement to the Human Rights Council by Vanessa Frazier, 10 March 2026, url
[799] UN Press, Public Statement by Chair of Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, 9 September 2024, url; UNSG, Children and armed conflict, Report of the Secretary-General, 17 June 2025, url, paras. 84, 88
[800] UN Press, Public Statement by Chair of Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, 9 September 2024, url
[801] CRC, Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Iraq, 5 June 2025, url, para. 51
[802] ICRC, Influencer, gamer, soldier, spy: the online era of child recruitment and its implications in international law (Part I), 1 October 2026, url
[803] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 11
[804] Shafaq News, Iraq advances repatriation from ISIS-linked camp in Syria, 6 September 2025, url

unaccompanied.[805] Returning families undergo mandatory three-to-six-month stays at rehabilitation centres,[806] where UN organisations assist with integration, civil registration, and identity documentation.[807] Returnee children present in the Amal rehabilitation centre received support from the UN and IOM.[808] However, these families face immense obstacles upon reintegration into society, including extreme poverty, public hostility,[809] and missing civil documentation and thus unable to receive state support.[810] Many returnees had to hide their identities to avoid accusations of affiliation with ISIL.[811] Children of alleged ISIL members, whose parents' marriage was not officially recognised, do not have birth certificates and cannot obtain additional legal documents.[812] Crucially, the Iraqi legal framework still lacks clear policies to safeguard children born from ISIL sexual violence,[813] and legal status of Yazidi children born out of ISIL sexual violence has not been clarified[814] (see also section 1.4.2 on Individuals with (perceived) affiliation to ISIL and section 2.3 on the Situation of the IDPs).

The treatment and detention of children associated with ISIL remains a concern.[815] According to UNICEF, some 2 400 children were in detention in 2024.[816] By the end of 2024, 531 children were detained on national security charges, including for their actual or perceived association with ISIL.[817] More recent data could not be found among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this report. In early 2026, about 5 700 detainees suspected of being ISIL members were transferred to Iraq, which included people of various nationalities, 467 of whom were Iraqis.[818] This includes young men who were detained as children, raising concerns about their treatment.[819] According to the administrative director of Iraq's National Center for International Judicial Cooperation, as quoted by Human Rights Watch, 95 % of the children 'were unlikely to be prosecuted', and seven children have been already released.[820]

1.7.3. Children without civil documentation

Practical obstacles to birth registration, particularly in areas with underdeveloped administrative systems or areas affected by armed conflict, have resulted in an estimated

[805] UNICEF, MENA Humanitarian Situation Report No. 2 (1 January to 31 December 2025), 3 May 2026, url, p. 3
[806] Palani K., 'Life After Hope': Integration Experiences of Families Returning from Al-Hol to Iraq, 10 October 2025, url
[807] UNICEF, MENA Humanitarian Situation Report No. 2 (1 January to 31 December 2025), 3 May 2026, url, p. 3
[808] UNSC, Twenty-second report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) [...], 2 February 2026, url, paras. 20, 29
[809] Palani K., 'Life After Hope': Integration Experiences of Families Returning from Al-Hol to Iraq, 10 October 2025, url; NZZ, Orphans of the IS caliphate face death if they return home, 26 September 2024, url
[810] NZZ, Orphans of the IS caliphate face death if they return home, 26 September 2024, url
[811] PeaceRep, 'Life After Hope': Integration Experiences of Families Returning from Al-Hol to Iraq, 10 October 2025, url
[812] NRC, Legal Guide to Children's Rights in Iraq, November 2024, url, p. 19
[813] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 11
[814] Equality Now, In Search of Justice: Rape laws in the Arab States, September 2025, url, p. 38
[815] CRC, Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Iraq, 18 July 2025, url, para. 51; UNHRC, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, 12 March 2026, url; HRW, Iraq: Dire Prospects for Alleged ISIS-Linked Men, Boys, 5 October 2026, url
[816] UNICEF Iraq, Country Report 2024, February 2025, url, p. 4
[817] Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, Children and Armed Conflict Monthly Update – November 2025, Recommendations to the Security Council, url
[818] Rudaw, Iraq to begin trials of ISIS detainees transferred from Syria in August, 15 July 2026, url
[819] HRW, Iraq: Dire Prospects for Alleged ISIS-Linked Men, Boys, 5 October 2026, url; UNHRC, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, 12 March 2026, url, para. 163
[820] HRW, Iraq: Dire Prospects for Alleged ISIS-Linked Men, Boys, 5 October 2026, url

45 000 children lacking civil documentation, according to an April 2025 report, subsequently excluding them from rights and services.[821] More recent data could not be found among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this report. Some hospitals allowed women to give birth in their facilities but did not automatically issue birth certificates for the children when the identity documents of both parents were not submitted.[822] Children born outside of a registered marriage cannot be registered unless a court ruling states that the parentage is unknown or cannot be proven. It further notes that marriages entered into informally can subsequently be legally registered and that, once parentage has been clarified by the court, a document replacing a birth certificate can be issued to register the child in the civil registry.[823] If a child was not issued a birth certificate at birth, the parents must apply for the *hijjat al-wilada* (birth document), which has the same function, at the Personal Status Court. The parents must appear with witnesses who can prove that the child is theirs, and if necessary, a DNA test may be conducted. Landinfo further reports that without either a birth certificate or a document from the Personal Status Court, a person cannot be registered or issued an NID. The Nationality Directorate in Erbil indicated that obtaining such a document from the court can 'take a long time'.[824]

Undocumented children are at severe risk of statelessness[825] and are systematically barred from essential rights and services, including public education[826] and healthcare.[827] Additionally, lack of identity papers increases their vulnerability to child labour.[828] Particularly affected are displaced children, children perceived as associated with ISIL,[829] and children born from unregistered marriages.[830] For children born out of ISIL sexual violence, obtaining civil documentation is 'exceptionally difficult'.[831]

As of March 2026, the situation in IDP camps remained 'unchanged' and returning families continued to face difficulties in obtaining civil documentation, particularly the national ID card. A study found that 40 % of households had at least one member without civil documentation.[832] In a report from May 2026, CEDAW mentioned allegations of children affiliated with ISIL being exploited in exchange for issuance of civil documentation.[833] In spite of the challenges, over 500 000 children were registered through a digital birth certification system in 2025.[834]

[821] Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights, Maat for Peace' report submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding the Republic of Iraq, April 2025, url, p. 5
[822] NRC, Legal Guide to Children's Rights in Iraq, [November 2024], url, p. 30
[823] Norway, Landinfo, Sivilregister, ID-dokumenter og pass, 2 March 2026, url, p. 13
[824] Norway, Landinfo, Sivilregister, ID-dokumenter og pass, 2 March 2026, url, p. 14
[825] HRW, Marriage Without Safeguards: The Consequences of Iraq's Personal Status Code, 24 February 2026, url; ILHR, Reclaiming Identity: Strategies for Civil Documentation in Iraq, 2024, url, p. 17
[826] ILHR, Reclaiming Identity: Strategies for Civil Documentation in Iraq, 2024, url, p. ii
[827] NRC, Legal Guide to Children's Rights in Iraq, [November 2024], url, p. 30
[828] ILHR, Reclaiming Identity: Strategies for Civil Documentation in Iraq, 2024, url, p. ii
[829] ILHR, Reclaiming Identity: Strategies for Civil Documentation in Iraq, 2024, url, p. ii
[830] HRW, Iraq: Unregistered Marriages Harm Women and Children, 3 March 2024, url
[831] Seed Foundation, et al., Children's right to identity in Iraq, 99th pre-session (September 2024), Combined Fifth and Sixth Periodic Report, September 2024, url, p. 4
[832] IOM and UNHCR, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq; As of March 2026, April 2026, url, pp. 2, 3, 4
[833] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 31
[834] UN Iraq, Annual Report 2025, 16 June 2026, url, p. 15

The protection and legal status of children born as a result of rape continue to pose significant challenges. Many survivors, upon returning to their communities, have been forced to leave behind children born of rape due to community rejection. Addressing this issue requires engagement with religious and traditional leaders to foster more enabling conditions for the recognition and protection of these children.[835] See also Children with perceived affiliation to ISIL.

1.7.4. Child trafficking and child labour

Although labour laws in Federal Iraq and the KRI set the minimum working age at 15,[836] penalising violations with up to six months in prison and fines,[837] child labour remains a pervasive issue.[838] While Iraqi government lacks precise data on child labour,[839] estimates suggest that approximately 5 %[840] to 13 %[841] of Iraqi children are engaged in labour. Civil society organisations estimate that around 900 000 children work on the streets,[842] while Iraqi authorities have stated that some 6 000 children under the age of 14 work on the streets.[843] Children were involved in construction work, work in shops, domestic labour,[844] and street begging.[845] Children are also working in services, agriculture, and industries sectors,[846] collecting recyclable materials in the streets.[847] Children working in the streets are more common in central and southern Iraq.[848] Baghdad has seen a rise in numbers of child street vendors.[849] Child labour is driven by extreme poverty, family breakdowns,[850] population growth, high unemployment, and lack of social safety nets,[851] and an estimated one[852] to five million orphaned or abandoned children,[853] many of them without any civil documentation.[854]

[835] UNSC, Letter dated 23 December 2025 from the representatives of Denmark, Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, S/2025/84, 23 December 2025, url, p. 6
[836] MEMO, Iraq to raid industrial areas to effort to tackle child labour, 31 January 2025, url
[837] NRC, Legal Guide to Children's Rights in Iraq, November 2024, url, p. 34
[838] IRC, IRC Iraq Protection Needs Overview: Monitoring and Trends; April - September 2025, 20 January 2026, url, pp. 11, 19; Kurdistan24, Child Labor in Iraq: Caught Between Family Poverty and Legal Gaps, 1 June 2026, url; Save the Children, Drought fuels child labour and school absences in northern Afghanistan – Save the Children, 25 March 2026, url
[839] Kurdistan24, Child Labor in Iraq: Caught Between Family Poverty and Legal Gaps, 1 June 2026, url
[840] Kurdistan24, Iraq's Lost Childhoods: Begging, Labor, and Broken Dreams, 29 April 2025, url; Shafaq News, Iraq's children face alarming crisis: rising labor, violence, and legal gaps, 24 November 2024, url
[841] Kurdistan24, Child Labor in Iraq: Caught Between Family Poverty and Legal Gaps, 1 June 2026, url
[842] Kurdistan24, Child Labor in Iraq: Caught Between Family Poverty and Legal Gaps, 1 June 2026, url
[843] Rudaw, 6000 minors working on the streets of Iraq: Spox, 20 August 2025, url
[844] IRC, IRC Iraq Protection Needs Overview: Monitoring and Trends; April - September 2025, 20 January 2026, url, p. 11
[845] IRC, IRC Iraq Protection Needs Overview: Monitoring and Trends; April - September 2025, 20 January 2026, url, p. 11; Kurdistan24, Iraq's Lost Childhoods: Begging, Labor, and Broken Dreams, 29 April 2025, url; Shafaq News, Iraq's children face alarming crisis: rising labor, violence, and legal gaps, 24 November 2024, url
[846] Shafaq News, Iraq's children face alarming crisis: rising labor, violence, and legal gaps, 24 November 2024, url
[847] Shafaq News, Iraq's forgotten children: Orphans of war left to scavenge for survival, 14 February 2025, url
[848] Kurdistan24, Child Labor in Iraq: Caught Between Family Poverty and Legal Gaps, 1 June 2026, url
[849] Shafaq News, Bottled childhood: Why Baghdad's children are selling water instead of playing, 23 June 2026, url
[850] Shafaq News, Bottled childhood: Why Baghdad's children are selling water instead of playing, 23 June 2026, url
[851] Kurdistan24, Child Labor in Iraq: Caught Between Family Poverty and Legal Gaps, 1 June 2026, url
[852] Child Aid International, Iraq Insights, n.d., url; Maat, Maat for Peace' report submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding the Republic of Iraq, April 2025, url, p. 8
[853] iNNOV8, Forgotten Lives: Addressing Orphanhood in Iraq, 20 November 2024, url, p. 2; Maat, Maat for Peace' report submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding the Republic of Iraq, April 2025, url, p. 8;
[854] iNNOV8, Forgotten Lives: Addressing Orphanhood in Iraq, 20 November 2024, url, p. 2

Financial pressures force households to use child labour as a survival mechanism,[855] often causing children to work during school hours.[856] In response, Iraqi authorities have implemented structural strategies,[857] including establishing monitoring committees,[858] issuing new national guidelines in May 2026,[859] and actively combating child trafficking: government interventions dismantled 19 criminal trafficking networks in 2025 and an additional seven in early 2026.[860] However, legal gaps remain, and CEDAW noted that child trafficking prosecutions still improperly require 'proof of force or coercion', while temporary *mut'ah* marriages continue to be exploited as a legal loophole for child trafficking and sexual exploitation.[861]

1.7.5. Child marriage

The enactment of the *Ja'afari* Personal Status Code in August 2025, which entered into force in October 2025, [862] has renewed concerns about child marriage in Iraq, particularly in relation to informal and unregistered marriages.[863] Although the Code does not formally lower the minimum age of marriage established under the 1959 Personal Status Law, concerns remain about its practical implications for the protection of girls and the ability of the authorities to monitor and regulate marriages conducted outside the formal court system. [864] Under the 1959 Personal Status Law, the minimum legal age for marriage is 18, although judicial exceptions may allow marriage from the age of 15 under certain circumstances.[865] In the KRI, where child marriage has been legally recognised as a form of domestic violence,[866] the minimum age is 18, with judicial exceptions allowing marriage from the age of 16.[867] Despite these legal restrictions, underage marriage remains widespread in Iraq.[868] It is believed that underage marriages of girls continue informally and are registered upon reaching the legal age.[869] Recent legal developments and *Ja'afari* religious practices allow marriages based on

[855] IRC, IRC Iraq Protection Needs Overview: Monitoring and Trends; April - September 2025, 20 January 2026, url, pp. 19-20
[856] IRC, IRC Iraq Protection Needs Overview: Monitoring and Trends; April - September 2025, 20 January 2026, url, pp. 19-20
[857] IRC, IRC Iraq Protection Needs Overview: Monitoring and Trends; April - September 2025, 20 January 2026, url, pp. 19-20; MEMO, Iraq to raid industrial areas to effort to tackle child labour, 31 January 2025, url
[858] MEMO, Iraq to raid industrial areas to effort to tackle child labour, 31 January 2025, url
[859] IINA, Iraq Takes Stand Against Child Labour With Shafak Foundation, 5 May 2026, url
[860] Shafaq News, Iraq arrests 5K+ in 2025 human trafficking cases, 19 July 2026, url
[861] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 31
[862] GCHR, GCHR's 36th Periodic Report on Human Rights Violations in Iraq, 27 October 2025, url
[863] UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para 64; CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 25 February 2026, url, para 29 (d); Wadi, Iraq's family laws are being rewritten, women and girls are paying the price, 3 March 2026, url; Jummar Media, From citizens to sects: The implications of Jaafari Code on Iraq, 17 October 2025, url; Ali H., How Legal Reforms in Iraq's Personal Status Law Institutionalise Sectarianism and Threaten Women's Rights, 11 October 2024, EISMENA, url
[864] UNSC, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024), Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para 64; Martini L.S., The Square Centre, From Personal Status to General Amnesty: A Controversial Political Process in Iraq, 12 March 2025, url;
[865] CRC, Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Iraq, 18 July 2025, url
[866] NLM, The Child Brides of Iraq, 16 July 2025, url
[867] CRC, Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Iraq, 18 July 2025, url
[868] CRC, Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Iraq, 18 July 2025, url; CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para. 27
[869] NLM, The Child Brides of Iraq, 16 July 2025, url

'puberty', legally permitting unions for girls as young as nine.[870] To bypass formal statutory restrictions, thousands of child marriages are conducted informally or through temporary *mut'ah* arrangements and only registered once the bride reaches adulthood[871] (see section 1.2.1 on Amendment on Personal Status Law and implementation of the *Ja'afari* Personal Status Code).

Prevalence of child marriages in Iraq has been steadily rising since 2003,[872] driven by poverty, low education levels, religious beliefs, notions of family honour,[873] and displacement.[874] This issue is heavily promoted by influential public figures who defend the practice as cultural tradition while dismissing opposition as foreign interference.[875] Unregistered unions leave young brides without legal protections or rights, exposing them to violence.[876] The highest rates of underage marriage occur in southern Shia-majority governorates, reaching nearly 40 % in Missan, Najaf, and Karbala.[877] In the KRI, prevalence of forced marriages reached 20 %, with higher prevalence in rural areas.[878] UNICEF reported that 22 % of all unregistered marriages involve girls under the age of 14[879] (see also section on Forced and unregistered marriage).

1.7.6. Access to education

Despite education being free[880] and compulsory[881] in Iraq, up to an estimated three million children remain out of school due to significant socio-economic barriers.[882] Some 256 000 children were identified by the UN as being out-of-school in 2025 (200 000 children were identified in 2024[883]).[884] Key obstacles include extreme poverty,[885] child labour,[886] early marriage,[887] lack of civil documentation for children born during the ISIL conflict,[888] and social

[870] Equality Now, Iraq's family laws are being rewritten, women and girls are paying the price, 6 February 2026, url; HRW, Marriage Without Safeguards: The Consequences of Iraq's Personal Status Code, 24 February 2026, url
[871] NLM, The Child Brides of Iraq, 16 July 2025, url
[872] HRW, World Report 2025 - Iraq, 16 January 2025, url; NLI, How Temporary Marriages Can Exploit Vulnerable Women in Iraq, 24 April 2025, url
[873] Girls Not Brides, Iraq, n.d., url
[874] UNFPA, Middle East Gender Based Violence in Emergencies Snapshot - April 2026, March 2026, url, p. 6; EFI, Violence Against Women and Girls in Iraq and The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Kr-I): Patterns, Causes, Awareness and Policy Responses National Study, October 2025, url, pp. 62, 68
[875] NLM, The Child Brides of Iraq, 16 July 2025, url
[876] NLI, How Temporary Marriages Can Exploit Vulnerable Women in Iraq, 24 April 2025, url
[877] NLM, The Child Brides of Iraq, 16 July 2025, url; UNFPA, Middle East Gender Based Violence in Emergencies Snapshot - April 2026, March 2026, url, p. 6
[878] Hussain, S. F., Violence Against Women: Towards a Policy Understanding of the Patriarchy, 5 February 2025, url
[879] NLM, The Child Brides of Iraq, 16 July 2025, url
[880] Education International, The Education Crisis in Iraq: A Call for Urgent Reforms, 25 March 2024, url; NRC, Legal Guide to Children's Rights in Iraq, [November 2024], url, p. 31
[881] Shafaq News, Behind the Bazaar: the hidden world of Erbil's child laborers, 12 September 2024, url
[882] Save the Children, Save the Children in Iraq, n.d., url; UNIEF, Iraq, Education, n.d., url
[883] UNICEF Iraq, Country Report 2024, February 2025, url, p. 5
[884] UN Iraq, Annual Report 2025, 16 June 2026, url, p. 28
[885] Kurdistan24, Iraq's Lost Childhoods: Begging, Labor, and Broken Dreams, 29 April 2025, url; Shafaq News, Behind the Bazaar: the hidden world of Erbil's child laborers, 12 September 2024, url
[886] IRC, IRC Iraq Protection Needs Overview: Monitoring and Trends; April - September 2025, 20 January 2026, url, pp. 19-20
[887] IRC, IRC Iraq Protection Needs Overview: Monitoring and Trends; April - September 2025, 20 January 2026, url, p. 11
[888] New Arab (The), For Iraq's undocumented children, returning home does not mean returning to school, 26 May 2026, url

norms that disproportionately affect girls' access.[889] Out-of-school youth face heightened risks of abuse and exploitation.[890] To counter these issues, the government launched targeted initiatives, including financial stipends[891] and prioritised re-enrolment of girls,[892] successfully returning thousands of children to the classroom in recent years: according to the UN, over 101 000 children who had previously dropped out returned to school in 2025.[893] In a September 2025 article, the authorities indicated that 251 000 students who had previously dropped out, returned to school.[894] Iraqi news outlets reported in May 2026 that 13 000 children returned to school in the ongoing academic year.[895]

The Iraqi educational system is affected by severe infrastructure deficiencies caused by years of conflict,[896] requiring an estimated 10 000 new schools to close the gap.[897] Existing institutions suffer from extreme overcrowding,[898] teacher shortages,[899] and a lack of basic services like water and sanitation.[900] In 2025, authorities improved access to education and learning environment in the country.[901] In September 2025, authorities indicated that about 450 new schools were opened. In total, 1 730 schools entered into service 'in addition to the rehabilitation' of 4 000 schools.[902] The progress remains threatened by safety concerns, including ongoing military usage of educational facilities[903] and direct attacks on schools, students, and educators.[904] According to the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), in the period of 2024-2025, there were at least four attacks on schools and at least seven attacks on students and teachers; additionally, there was one case of use of schools for military use.[905]

[889] IRC, IRC Iraq Protection Needs Overview: Monitoring and Trends; April - September 2025, 20 January 2026, url, p. 11
[890] Borgen Project (The), Little-Known Facts About Child Poverty In Iraq, 21 April 2025, url
[891] Kurdistan24, Iraq's Lost Childhoods: Begging, Labor, and Broken Dreams, 29 April 2025, url; Rudaw, Iraq offers incentives to bring drop-outs back to school, 26 September 2025, url
[892] UNICEF Iraq, Country Report 2024, February 2025, url, p. 6
[893] UN Iraq, Annual Report 2025, 16 June 2026, url, p. 28
[894] +964, Iraq opens new school year with 1 700 new schools, 251 000 dropouts returning, 22 September 2025, url
[895] New Arab (The), Poverty and displacement fuel Iraq's growing school dropout crisis, 25 May 2026, url; Shafaq News, Iraq returns 13K+ dropout students to school, 23 May 2026, url
[896] Borgen Project (The), Little-Known Facts About Child Poverty In Iraq, 21 April 2025, url; World Bank (The), Iraq: Improving Quality of Education and Access to Enable All Students to Learn, 29 October 2024, url
[897] Maat, Maat for Peace' report submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding the Republic of Iraq, April 2025, url, pp. 10-11
[898] Jummar Media, The displacement of schools: Why double shifts and overcrowding in schools won't end in Iraq, 16 January 2025, url; Kurdistan24, Iraq's Lost Childhoods: Begging, Labor, and Broken Dreams, 29 April 2025, url
[899] One Young World, The consequences of prioritising survival over education, February 2025, url
[900] Jummar Media, The displacement of schools: Why double shifts and overcrowding in schools won't end in Iraq, 16 January 2025, url; Maat, Maat for Peace' report submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding the Republic of Iraq, April 2025, url, pp. 10-11
[901] UN Iraq, Annual Report 2025, 16 June 2026, url, p. 28
[902] +964, Iraq opens new school year with 1 700 new schools, 251 000 dropouts returning, 22 September 2025, url
[903] CRC, Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Iraq, 18 July 2025, url, para. 51
[904] GCPEA, Education Under Attack; 2026, 2026, url, pp. 154-156
[905] GCPEA, Education Under Attack; 2026, 2026, available at: url, pp. 154-156

1.8. LGBTIQ

In April 2024, an amendment to the 1988 anti-prostitution law was adopted, imposing prison sentences for same-sex relations.[906] In addition, the anti-LGBTIQ law explicitly targets transgender women with penalties for 'imitating women'. The law also outlaws undergoing or performing gender-affirming procedures, except for individuals born with intersex characteristics.[907] While Iraq did not have an explicit anti-LGBTIQ legislation before this amendment,[908] LGBTIQ individuals faced prosecutions under vague laws,[909] such as those criminalising 'immodest acts' and 'prostitution', as well as Sharia law.[910] LGBTIQ individuals were reported as living in fear already before the April 2024 legislation.[911]

Since the October 2019 Tishreen protests, sociopolitical discourse in Iraq focused on criticising gender and homosexuality, portraying them as a 'western plot' against traditional Islamic values; this trend has had a negative repercussion particularly on female activists, feminists, and LGBTIQ individuals.[912] Since August 2023, Iraqi media regulator[913] has banned media from using the word 'homosexuality' and instructed to replace it with 'sexual deviance',[914] which they followed as of 2025,[915] impairing the ability to report on LGBTIQ issues objectively.[916] Authorities pressured social media companies to remove LGBTIQ content.[917] Anti-LGBTIQ sentiment was fuelled by media,[918] politicians,[919] armed militias,[920] and religious leaders[921] (see also section 1.9 Individuals perceived as transgressing moral and Islamic norms). LGBTIQ individuals are compelled to keep their identity secret to avoid abuses[922] and many LGBTIQ people were forced into heterosexual marriages.[923] According to

[906] AP, Passage of harsh anti-LGBTQ+ law in Iraq draws diplomatic backlash, 28 April 2024, url
[907] IraQueer, Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Iraq, July 2024, url, p. 7
[908] Human Dignity Trust, Iraq, last updated 21 January 2025, url
[909] Erasing 76 Crimes, Global update: The struggle for LGBTQ rights continues in Asia, 1 January 2025, url; The New Arab, Iraq bans media from using term 'homosexuality', says must use 'sexual deviance', 9 August 2023, url
[910] Human Dignity Trust, Iraq, last updated 21 January 2025, url
[911] MEE, Gay and trans Iraqis plagued by threats, violence - and now the law, 11 May 2024, url
[912] Mustafa, B., Gender found Guilty: Anti-Gender Backlash and (Dis)Translation Politics in Iraq. 24 June 2025, url
[913] The Communications and Media Commission is an independent body mandated to safeguard freedom of expression in Iraq while ensuring that the exercise of this freedom 'does not violate public order and morality'. See: TWI, Iraq's "Muqawama Government" Drives Out Prominent LGBTQ Advocate, 10 February 2023, url
[914] AI, Iraq: Authorities must immediately reverse media ban on the terms "homosexuality" and "gender", 9 August 2023, url; New Arab (The), Iraq bans media from using term 'homosexuality', says must use 'sexual deviance', 9 August 2023, url HRW, World Report 2026; Iraq, 4 February 2026, url
[915] HRW, World Report 2026; Iraq, 4 February 2026, url
[916] IraQueer, Criminalized Existence: The Ongoing Attacks on LGBT+ Citizens in Iraq, 2025, url, p. 32
[917] Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2024 - Iraq, 16 October 2024, url
[918] IPS, IRAQ: 'Tolerance for Abuses Against LGBTQI+ People Has Now Been Made Explicit Through Legislation', 1 July 2024, url; IraQueer, Criminalized Existence: The Ongoing Attacks on LGBT+ Citizens in Iraq, 2025, url, p. 12
[919] IPS, IRAQ: 'Tolerance for Abuses Against LGBTQI+ People Has Now Been Made Explicit Through Legislation', 1 July 2024, url; Outright International, Country overview: Iraq, last updated 12 March 2026, url; IraQueer, Criminalized Existence: The Ongoing Attacks on LGBT+ Citizens in Iraq, 2025, url, pp. 14, 20, 21
[920] IraQueer, Criminalized Existence: The Ongoing Attacks on LGBT+ Citizens in Iraq, 2025, url, p. 14
[921] Outright International, Country overview: Iraq, last updated 12 March 2026, url
[922] Boutier, I., Iraq's New Anti-LGBTQIA+ Legislation: A Regressive Step in Upholding Human Rights and Dignity, 2024, url, p. 4, 5; IraQueer, Criminalized Existence: The Ongoing Attacks on LGBT+ Citizens in Iraq, 2025, url, p. 30
[923] Outright International, Country overview: Iraq, last updated 12 March 2026, url

Haley Bobseine, same-sex relations and perceived violations of gender and sexual norms can also lead to honour killings.[924]

Since 2024, Iraqi authorities accentuated their repression on LGBTIQ people[925] and the trend has continued in 2025.[926] In June 2026, IraQueer, an Iraqi NGO supporting LGBTIQ rights based in Sweden, indicated that the authorities in Federal Iraq started enforcing the Anti-Prostitution Law,[927] reporting on a group arrest[928] and another case of a possible prison sentence for a man for his sexual orientation.[929] There is no legal protection against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity[930] even though equality is guaranteed to all Iraqis under the constitution.[931] There were reports of targeting LGBTIQ throughout 2025.[932] LGBTIQ people faced stigma,[933] threats,[934] targeting online,[935] hate crimes,[936] discrimination and violence,[937] and male prisoners perceived as gay were subjected to sexual violence and trafficking.[938] On 22 January 2026, a man shot dead his son after believing that he was gay after seeing him in an 'immoral video'.[939] Additionally, abuses by armed groups continued with impunity.[940] In the period of 2007-2021, there were reports of 'organized killing campaigns' against LGBTIQ people and no information is available on whether any perpetrators were brought to justice as of 2025.[941] The lack of accountability for abuses, combined with the prevailing patriarchal social norms, exacerbate the situation.[942]

LGBTIQ rights groups have been effectively banned[943] and cannot openly operate.[944] The organisation of the assassinated activist Yanar Mohammed, OWFI, has been described as 'likely the only organization in Iraq that is positioned and willing to carry out assistance' to

[924] Bobseine, H., Senior Iraq researcher and analyst specializing on tribal affairs, Interview, 28-29 October 2024, and email communication, 13 July 2025
[925] Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2024 - Iraq, 16 October 2024, url; TIMEP , Being Queer in the MENA Region: Guilty Until Proven Innocent, 28 January 2025, url
[926] IraQueer, Criminalized Existence: The Ongoing Attacks on LGBT+ Citizens in Iraq, 2025, url, p. 4
[927] IraQueer, [Instagram], posted on 13 June 2026, url
[928] IraQueer, [Instagram], posted on 29 April 2026, url
[929] IraQueer, [Instagram], posted on 13 June 2026, url
[930] IraQueer, Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Iraq, July 2024, url, p. 6; ILGA, ILGA Database, Iraq, n.d., url
[931] IraQueer, Criminalized Existence: The Ongoing Attacks on LGBT+ Citizens in Iraq, 2025, url, p. 22
[932] HRW, World Report 2026; Iraq, 4 February 2026, url; IraQueer, Criminalized Existence: The Ongoing Attacks on LGBT+ Citizens in Iraq, 2025, url, p. 21
[933] IraQueer, [Instagram], posted on 13 June 2026, url
[934] IraQueer, [Instagram], posted on 13 June 2026, url; Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2024 - Iraq, 16 October 2024, url
[935] HRW, World Report 2026; Iraq, 4 February 2026, url; DW, Iraqi LGBTQ+ community loses social media safe space, 5 April 2024, url; IraQueer, Safety and Security Guidelines for LGBT+ in Iraq and Kurdistan, [2025] url, pp. 1, 11- 12
[936] IraQueer, Safety and Security Guidelines for LGBT+ in Iraq and Kurdistan, 2025 url, pp. 1, 12
[937] Human Dignity Trust, Iraq, last updated 8 June 2026, url; Outright International, Country overview: Iraq, last updated 12 March 2026, url
[938] IraQueer, [Instagram], posted on 28 August 2025, url
[939] IraQueer, [Instagram], posted on 28 January 2026, url
[940] HRW, World Report 2026; Iraq, 4 February 2026, url
[941] IraQueer, Criminalized Existence: The Ongoing Attacks on LGBT+ Citizens in Iraq, 2025, url, p. 13
[942] Boutier, I., Iraq's New Anti-LGBTQIA+ Legislation: A Regressive Step in Upholding Human Rights and Dignity, 2024, url, p. 4, 5
[943] IraQueer, Criminalized Existence: The Ongoing Attacks on LGBT+ Citizens in Iraq, 2025, url, p. 19
[944] IPS , IRAQ: 'Tolerance for Abuses Against LGBTQI+ People Has Now Been Made Explicit Through Legislation', 1 July 2024, url

LGBTIQ individuals in Iraq.[945] In the KRI, there was a bill in 2022 to ban gay activism,[946] which has not passed;[947] nevertheless, the only NGO promoting LGBTIQ rights in KRI, Rasan Organisation, was shut down by the Kurdish authorities in May 2023.[948] In September 2025, security forces in KRI were reportedly using dating application Grindr to lure and arrest gay men, conducting a 'campaign of raids and arrests'.[949]

1.9. Individuals perceived as transgressing moral and Islamic norms

For more information on individuals perceived as transgressing moral and Islamic norms, see the EUAA Country Focus, May 2024, section 1.6.

1.9.1. Honour crimes and behaviours/acts perceived as contravening sexuality and gender norms

In Iraq, traditional patriarchal norms define what is considered as acceptable behaviour; women not following rules of what is considered as an acceptable behaviour risk being excluded from society and losing family support.[950] Honour-related abuses can include physical abuse, confinement, control of movement, deprivation of education, forced marriage, forced suicide, and public dishonouring.[951] Honour killings target individuals, mostly women, believed to have brought shame or dishonour on their families.[952] Violations of honour encompass acts perceived as contravening sexuality and gender norms; understanding of honour is deeply influenced by tribal customs. Most victims are women and girls, and to a smaller extent men. A wide array of actions can trigger these violations, ranging from unmarried correspondence, pre-marital relationships, same-sex orientation, and refusal of arranged marriages to seeking a divorce, wearing non-traditional clothing, or even being a victim of sexual assault. When perceived transgressions occur, male relatives (such as fathers, brothers, or husbands) are socially expected to 'wash away the dishonour' of the female relative, or to restore honour to the family and tribe's reputation, by killing the said relative.[953] Honour killings do not affect only Muslim and Arab communities but also Yazidis, Turkmen,

[945] The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, Yanar Mohammad, n.d., url. See also: ILGA, ILGA World condemns killing of Yanar Mohammed as cruel intimidation against those working for freedom and equality, 5 March 2026, url.
[946] MEE, Iraq: Activists condemn proposed law banning LGBTQ+ advocacy in Kurdish region, 6 September 2022, url
[947] HRW, Kurdistan Region of Iraq: LGBT Rights Group Shuttered, 6 July 2023, url
[948] Frontline Defenders, Rasan Organisation was shut down by a judicial order over rainbow-coloured logo, 31 May 2023, url
[949] IraQueer, [Instagram], posted on 10 September 2025, url
[950] Gadd, K., Ubeis, F., "I must care about the reputation of my family. This is very important to me": an exploration of factors affecting Iraqi women's access to justice, 12 April 2025, url
[951] Salih, H. M., Honor Killing in Erbil City; Social Factors A Field Study, 5 May 2025, url, p. 257
[952] Salih, H. M., Honor Killing in Erbil City; Social Factors A Field Study, 5 May 2025, url, p. 252
[953] Bobseine, H., Senior Iraq researcher and analyst specializing on tribal affairs, Interview, 28-29 October 2024, and email communication, 13 July 2025

and others.[954] Iraq's federal legal framework offers reduced sentences for honour killings on the assumption that they are 'natural' reactions to family shame.[955]

Beyond domestic control, the concept of honour has also prevented women from taking roles in public life, portraying their work as contradictory to women's traditional family roles.[956] Feminist activism has gradually started disappearing from the public life after the October 2019 uprising (Tishreen).[957] A coordinated campaign by political actors and armed groups was set to remove women from public, creating 'an uncomfortable or unsafe environment for women participating in public work', affecting female journalists, politicians, and civil servants pressured to leave their work.[958] In July 2023, authorities launched a campaign against 'gender and social deviance' aimed against activism and particularly affecting feminist and LGBTIQ causes.[959] Since then, the conditions have worsened for women advocacy groups,[960] which have faced targeted campaigns against them,[961] restrictions,[962] threats, attacks, and arbitrary detentions.[963] In February 2026, a prominent women rights activist, Yanar Mohammed, was assassinated by unknown assailants near her home in Baghdad.[964] Before the assassination, she faced threats and online abuse linked to armed groups.[965] Her murder has caused a chilling effect on women active in public life.[966] As of 10 June 2026, nobody has been charged with the crime.[967] Other cases included a female psychiatrist murdered in Basra at the end of 2025; her death was recorded as a suicide and activists covering her death were arrested;[968] and a female lawyer murdered in April 2026.[969] In August 2025, a woman was arrested in Erbil for behavior 'incompatible with the customs' of KRI after a video of her dancing on a motorbike was spread online.[970] In March 2026, a (Christian) woman was arrested for 'expressing joy' over the death of Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in public, and she was charged with 'insulting religious symbols'. The woman's identity and personal

[954] Bobseine H., Senior Iraq researcher and analyst specializing on tribal affairs, Interview, 28-29 October 2024 and email communication to EUAA, 13 July 2025
[955] Hussain, S. F., Violence Against Women: Towards a Policy Understanding of the Patriarchy, 5 February 2025, url
[956] IOHR, The Systematic Erasure: Excluding Women from Iraq's Public Sphere, 8 March 2026, url
[957] Kohl: a Journal for Body and Gender Research, The Spectre of Feminism in Post-October Iraq: on Political Absence and the Paralysis of Organising, 2025, url
[958] IOHR, The Systematic Erasure: Excluding Women from Iraq's Public Sphere, 8 March 2026, url
[959] Kohl: a Journal for Body and Gender Research, The Spectre of Feminism in Post-October Iraq: on Political Absence and the Paralysis of Organising, 2025, url
[960] AI, Iraq: Government must chart a new course by ending impunity and upholding human rights, 17 August 2026, url; GIZ, Driving change for women's rights and representation in Iraq, last updated February 2025, url
[961] IOHR, The Systematic Erasure: Excluding Women from Iraq's Public Sphere, 8 March 2026, url; NGOWG, Monthly Action Points (MAP) for the Security Council: May 2025, 30 April 2025, url; Mustafa, B., Gender found Guilty: Anti-Gender Backlash and (Dis) Translation Politics in Iraq, 24 June 2025, url
[962] Mustafa, B., Gender found Guilty: Anti-Gender Backlash and (Dis)Translation Politics in Iraq, 24 June 2025, url
[963] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq, 20 May 2026, url, para 29
[964] New Arab (The), Yanar Mohammed: Remembering Iraq's prominent feminist and lifelong defender of women's rights, 3 March 2026, url
[965] IOHR, Iraq Between "Tishreen" and "October 7": A Collusion to Suppress Freedoms, 10 May 2025, url; OHCHR, Iraq: UN experts demand investigation into murder of woman human rights defender, 24 April 2026, url
[966] Guardian (The), 'Will they kill us too?' Murder of leading feminist has chilling effect on Iraq's activists, 21 April 2026, url
[967] Equality Now, Yanar Mohammed was assassinated 100 days ago. No one has been charged., 10 June 2026, url
[968] Guardian (The), 'Will they kill us too?' Murder of leading feminist has chilling effect on Iraq's activists, 21 April 2026, url
[969] Guardian (The), 'Will they kill us too?' Murder of leading feminist has chilling effect on Iraq's activists, 21 April 2026, url
[970] Rudaw, Woman arrested in Erbil for dancing publicly on motorcycle, 18 August 2025, url

information, including her home address, were made public on TV, triggering fears of a possible mob attack.[971] Additionally, Shafaq News reported on an increased prevalence of violence against men in KRI, registering over 500 cases in the first ten months of 2025, including 529 cases of men assaulted by women, 45 men dying by suicide, and 17 men killed in 'incidents linked to family or community disputes'.[972] The trend continued in early 2026, registering almost 200 cases of violence by April, including seven killings linked to family disputes. The phenomenon was linked to the economic and family pressure, as well as the influence of social media.[973]

1.9.2. Online expression

Iraqi authorities have established a rigorous digital surveillance[974] and censorship framework to police online expression under the guise of protecting public morality, national security, and social order.[975] Content described as 'low content' and 'immoral' has been banned.[976] Anchored by 2023 media regulations and the Ministry of Interior's reporting platform Ballegh,[977] the state enables the public to report 'derogatory or degrading' online content[978] and prosecutes offenders under the articles 372 and 403 of the Penal Code criminalising material deemed as blasphemous and immoral,[979] without properly defining the terms.[980] Among those targeted were LGBTIQ people[981] and women,[982] who were also exposed to harassment campaigns[983] and extortion,[984] but also artists and business owners.[985] Among expressions that have been targeted are homosexuality,[986] atheist or non-conforming religious speech,[987] and material critical of state institutions.[988] Those accused of sharing inappropriate

[971] Diplomatic Herald, Special Report — Iraqi Christian Woman Arrested and Beaten for Celebrating Khamenei's Death, 4 March 2026, url
[972] Shafaq News, Kurdistan Region's social alarm: 500+ men abused in 2025, 19 November 2025, url
[973] Shafaq News, Violence against men in Kurdistan hits "shocking" levels in early 2026, 25 April 2026, url
[974] ODHE, Mass Surveillance In The Maghreb And Mashreq, A critical analysis to protect civil society, November 2024, url, pp. 90-91; Regulations.AI, Iraq - Digital Content Regulation, 6 January 2026, url
[975] Regulations.AI, Iraq - Digital Content Regulation, 6 January 2026, url
[976] Regulations.AI, Iraq - Digital Content Regulation, 6 January 2026, url
[977] Regulations.AI, Iraq - Digital Content Regulation, 6 January 2026, url
[978] UNSC, Implementation of Resolution 2631 (2022): Report of the Secretary-General, 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
[979] Shafaq News, Arrest warrant for Omar al-Jamal over hate speech targeting Shiite candidates, 10 November 2025, url; Shafaq News, Acts and unclear legislation: Legal pursuits in Iraq over blasphemy and "immoral content", 3 October 2025, url
[980] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2025, 21 April 2026, url, accessed 15 June 2026
[981] ODHE , Mass Surveillance In The Maghreb And Mashreq, A critical analysis to protect civil society, November 2024, url, pp. 92-93
[982] SecDev Foundation (The), Digital Violence Against Women in Conflict Zones in the Middle East and North Africa, July 2025, url, p. 7; Kohl: a Journal for Body and Gender Research, The Spectre of Feminism in Post-October Iraq: on Political Absence and the Paralysis of Organising, 2025, url
[983] ODHE , Mass Surveillance In The Maghreb And Mashreq, A critical analysis to protect civil society, November 2024, url, pp. 92-93
[984] Bobseine, H., Senior Iraq researcher and analyst specializing on tribal affairs, Interview, 29 October 2024, and email communication, 13 July 2025; Nonviolent Peaceforce International, Protecting Against Gender-Based Cyber Violence in Iraq, 18 March 2025, url
[985] INSM, The Reality of Digital Rights in Iraq: Joint Repression by the Government and Tech Companies!, 2026, url
[986] Regulations.AI, Iraq - Digital Content Regulation, 6 January 2026, url
[987] Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2024 - Iraq, 16 October 2024, url
[988] SMEX, Iraq's Controversial "Ballegh" Platform for "Combating Indecent Content", 15 February 2023, url

content were arrested[989] and fines and prison sentences up to two years were given.[990] Prosecutions continued being reported throughout 2024[991] and in 2025,[992] with authorities 'routinely' arresting internet users in both Federal Iraq and KRI over their online expression.[993] According to Freedom House, those accused did not get due process and faced arbitrary penalties.[994] The use of the Ballegh platform continued through 2025 and into 2026.[995] The existence of the platform has reportedly led to a climate of self-censorship.[996] In the period of 2023-2025, Shafaq News indicated that Iraqi authorities 'pursued dozens of cases against individuals accused of blasphemy or producing "immoral content."'[997] Those arrested included influencers, artists, and media personalities in Baghdad, Mosul, and Al-Anbar.[998] In November 2025, a media personality was arrested for 'immoral content', allegedly for insulting religious figures when talking about the parliamentary elections.[999] In April 2026, authorities started proceedings against an influencer over his spending (giveaways for his followers) while the case included also references to 'content deemed inconsistent with public decency'.[1000]

To further control the digital landscape, in March 2025, the government introduced mandatory registration schemes and fees for content creators,[1001] alongside demands to comply with standards such as 'respect for Iraq's national sovereignty and reputation and support for the state's struggle against terrorism and extremism.'[1002] State actions have also targeted major digital platforms; in 2025, Iraqi authorities discussed banning TikTok (the most commonly social media platform used in Iraq)[1003] over its alleged inappropriate content,[1004] and in 2026, they requested the platform to cooperate with the state and remove certain content and 'combat illegal activities'.[1005] Telegram has also been temporarily blocked.[1006] In October 2025, Iraq banned gaming platform Roblox to 'protect social order, preserve moral values', alleging

[989] Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2024 - Iraq, 16 October 2024, url
[990] +964, 'Public decency', Iraqi TikToker arrested for 'indecent content' amid social media crackdown, 22 August 2024, url
[991] +964, 'Public decency', Iraqi TikToker arrested for 'indecent content' amid social media crackdown, 22 August 2024, url; Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2024 - Iraq, 16 October 2024, url; Article19, Iraq : Balgh platform marks two years as a tool of repression, 16 January 2025, url; Mena Rights Group, Iraq: the escalating crackdow on civic space, 2 September 2024, url
[992] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2025, 21 April 2026, url, accessed 15 June 2026
[993] Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2025 - Iraq, 13 November 2025, url, accessed 5 August 2026
[994] Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2024 - Iraq, 16 October 2024, url
[995] MADR, The State of Digital Rights in Iraq: Collaborative Repression Between the Authorities and Technology Companies!, [March 2026], url
[996] Article19, Iraq : Balgh platform marks two years as a tool of repression, 16 January 2025, url; INSM, The Reality of Digital Rights in Iraq: Joint Repression by the Government and Tech Companies!, 2026, url
[997] Shafaq News, Acts and unclear legislation: Legal pursuits in Iraq over blasphemy and "immoral content", 3 October 2025, url
[998] Shafaq News, Arrest warrant for Omar al-Jamal over hate speech targeting Shiite candidates, 10 November 2025, url
[999] Shafaq News, Arrest warrant for Omar al-Jamal over hate speech targeting Shiite candidates, 10 November 2025, url
[1000] Shafaq News, Iraqi influencer faces probe over funding behind social media prizes, 31 May 2026, url
[1001] Arab News, Iraq imposes new fees on social media influencers in latest crackdown on digital content, 27 Mach 2025, url
[1002] Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2025 - Iraq, 13 November 2025, url, accessed 5 August 2026
[1003] Rudaw, Iraq's 40.1 million social media accounts outpace 39.6 million internet users: Watchdog, 17 June 2026, url
[1004] INA, MOC: A request to ban TikTok awaits Parliament's decision, 5 April 2025, url; TWI, Under the Pretext of "Morality": Morality Rhetoric and Freedom of Expression in Iraq, 15 June 2025, url
[1005] ShafaqNews, Iraq urges TikTok to address illegal activities, 16 May 2026, url
[1006] INSM, The Reality of Digital Rights in Iraq: Joint Repression by the Government and Tech Companies!, 2026, url

that the game included ‘sexual content, blasphemy and risks of online blackmail against minors’.[1007]

1.9.3. Individuals selling/consuming alcohol

In November 2024, Iraqi authorities banned the sale of alcohol in hotels and so-called social clubs, a few remaining venues serving alcohol, sending letters to businesses in Baghdad and threatening them with ‘legal action’. Fines up to 10-25 million Iraqi dinars (about 6 500-16 500 EUR) were also applicable.[1008] In targeted security operations, police raided places storing alcohol and confiscated it.[1009] In December 2025, authorities closed venues selling alcohol in the Bataween neighbourhood in Baghdad; four venues legally selling alcohol remained in the capital.[1010] The ban does not apply in the KRI[1011] which has led to increased instances of alcohol smuggling into Federal Iraq.[1012] Police continued enforcing the ban in 2026 and targeted vehicles smuggling alcohol from KRI.[1013]

Although the sale of alcohol has been already banned since 2016, it continued to be available and was in many cases sold in liquor stores by licensed non-Muslims, including Christian and Yazidi businesses.[1014] The legal ban entered effectively into force in 2023.[1015] Following the ban, alcohol reportedly remained available at the Baghdad International Airport and in the KRI. The announcement led to ‘dozens of establishments’ being closed, leading their Yazidi owners to organise protests in Baghdad. Even though Muslims are also reported as customers and alcohol consumers, the policy has disproportionately affected religious minorities who tend to be the owners of alcohol businesses, mainly Yazidis and Christians.[1016] An Iraqi Christian group described the ban as a ‘commercial matter under a religious disguise’ and warned of spread of drug markets controlled by armed groups.[1017] The ban has also been described as unlawful and discriminatory towards the religious minorities.[1018] Some alcohol vendors legally challenged the ban on the bases that it is against the constitution, but without any success.[1019] An academic study published in February 2025 has found that the consumption of alcohol in Iraq is more stigmatised than the consumption of other drugs.[1020] In

[1007] New Arab (The), Iraq bans Roblox game platform citing 'moral values', 20 October 2026, url
[1008] Washington Post (The), Iraq bans alcohol in hotels and clubs, bringing country close to near-total ban, 19 November 2024, url
[1009] +964, Police raid two illegal alcohol storage sites in Baghdad, url
[1010] +964, Authorities shut down alcohol outlets in Baghdad's Karrada area, 12 December 2025, url
[1011] New Arab (The), Mapped: Which Muslim-majority countries allow alcohol consumption?, 12 December 2025, url
[1012] Shafaq News, Iraq’s alcohol ban, one year on: How enforcement outpaced social policy, 9 January 2026, url
[1013] +964, Diyala police seize truck carrying smuggled alcohol near checkpoint, 20 April 2026, url; +964, Border authority foils smuggling attempts at federal checkpoints, 14 February 2026, url
[1014] Washington Post (The), Iraq bans alcohol in hotels and clubs, bringing country close to near-total ban, 19 November 2024, url
[1015] Shafaq News, Iraq’s alcohol ban, one year on: How enforcement outpaced social policy, 9 January 2026, url
[1016] Al Monitor, Iraq's prohibition zeal threatens Baghdad's boozy subculture, 21 December 2024, url
[1017] Shafaq News, Iraqi Christian bloc condemns alcohol ban, warns of drug proliferation, 18 November 2024, url
[1018] Iraqi News, Iraq prohibits alcohol in hotels, social clubs, 20 November 2024, url; Shafaq News, Iraq’s alcohol ban, one year on: How enforcement outpaced social policy, 9 January 2026, url; +964, Police raid two illegal alcohol storage sites in Baghdad, url; New Region (The), Baghdad's dry tourism: Alcohol ban raises questions, 10 May 2025, url
[1019] New Region (The), Baghdad's dry tourism: Alcohol ban raises questions, 10 May 2025, url
[1020] Al Ansari, M. et al., Alcohol use in Iraq: Perceptions of interviewed students at three Iraqi universities, 23 February 2025, url

an article from January 2026, Shafaq News reported that closing of alcohol stores contributed to the rise in narcotics use; resulting in seizures of narcotics, arrests, and issuing sentences including life sentences and death penalties[1021] (see section 1.3 Ethnic and religious minorities).

1.10. Tribal justice and tribal violence

Family and tribal affiliations remain important social and political reference points for many Iraqis, alongside national and religious identities. Tribal networks continue to influence political, economic and social life, particularly in rural areas and in central and southern governorates,[1022] where they operate alongside the formal justice system.[1023] Tribal influence over security and dispute resolution has remained substantial during the reporting period[1024] and tribal disputes continue to occur in parts of central and southern Iraq.[1025] Tribal mechanisms are widely used to resolve disputes over land, homicide, property and family matters,[1026] especially where state institutions are perceived as ineffective or inaccessible.[1027] Weak governance[1028] and the rule of law[1029], corruption,[1030] the widespread availability of weapons,[1031] including heavy weapons,[1032] and the enduring influence of tribal leaders[1033] have enabled customary dispute-resolution mechanisms and tribal authority to remain significant.[1034]

[1021] Shafaq News, Iraq's alcohol ban, one year on: How enforcement outpaced social policy, 9 January 2026, url
[1022] Encyclopaedia Britannica, Arabs of Iraq, 1 June 2026, url
[1023] Bobseine H., Senior Iraq researcher and analyst specializing on tribal affairs, email communication to EUAA, 13 July 2025
[1024] New Region (The), Tribal dispute in Maysan kills 13, 15 November 2025, url
[1025] Kurdistan24, Deadly Tribal Clash in Central Iraq Highlights Deep-Rooted Governance and Security Failures, 15 November 2025, url
[1026] Amwaj, 'Facebook sheikhs' in focus as Iraqi lawmakers probe 'blood money', 29 August 2024, url
[1027] Arif, R. Z., Tribes and Democracy in Iraq—Are Iraqi Tribes a Steppingstone on the Path to Democracy?, 16 January 2025, url, p. 256
[1028] Scientific Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Science, Causes of Tribal Conflicts in Maysan Province, Volume 5 Issue 1 (Jan-June, 2025), url, p. 1; Arif, R. Z., Tribes and Democracy in Iraq—Are Iraqi Tribes a Steppingstone on the Path to Democracy?, Open Journal of Political Science, 16 January 2025, url, p. 256; Kurdistan24, Deadly Tribal Clash in Central Iraq Highlights Deep-Rooted Governance and Security Failures, 15 November 2025, url; Kurdistan24, Tribal Justice and State Fragility: The Enduring Influence of Clans in Southern Iraq, 29 January 2025, url
[1029] Scientific Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Science, Causes of Tribal Conflicts in Maysan Province, Volume 5 Issue 1 (Jan-June, 2025), url, p. 1
[1030] New Region (The), Tribal dispute in Maysan kills 13, 15 November 2025, url; Waradana, Iraq: Police Corruption Fuels Tribal Conflicts, 10 October 2024, url
[1031] New Region (The), Tribal dispute in Maysan kills 13, 15 November 2025, url; Kurdistan24, Deadly Tribal Clash in Central Iraq Highlights Deep-Rooted Governance and Security Failures, 15 November 2025, url
[1032] Shafaq News, Iraqi Police battle legal gaps and tribal power, 19 September 2025, url; Waradana, Iraq: Police Corruption Fuels Tribal Conflicts, 10 October 2024, url
[1033] Kurdistan24, Deadly Tribal Clash in Central Iraq Highlights Deep-Rooted Governance and Security Failures, 15 November 2025, url
[1034] Kurdistan24, Deadly Tribal Clash in Central Iraq Highlights Deep-Rooted Governance and Security Failures, 15 November 2025, url; Arif, R. Z., Tribes and Democracy in Iraq—Are Iraqi Tribes a Steppingstone on the Path to Democracy?, 16 January 2025, url, p. 256; Kurdistan24, Tribal Justice and State Fragility: The Enduring Influence of Clans in Southern Iraq, 29 January 2025, url; Shafaq News, Al-Sudani urges Iraqi tribes to end disputes, Support business stability, 10 February 2025, url

Overlapping relationships between tribal leaders, political actors and elements of the security apparatus constrain the effective enforcement of the rule of law.[1035]

Tribal violence remains a persistent security challenge in parts of Iraq, [1036] with local disputes often escalating rapidly due to the widespread availability of firearms[1037] and the limited capacity of state institutions to prevent or effectively contain such incidents. [1038] Armed tribal clashes continued to occur throughout 2025 and into 2026,[1039] particularly in central and southern governorates[1040] such as Missan,[1041] Thi Qar, Basrah[1042] and Wasit,[1043] but also in Baghdad[1044] and, more occasionally, in northern Iraq.[1045] Disputes continued to arise over agricultural land, [1046] water resources,[1047] honour-related grievances[1048] and longstanding disputes.[1049] Several incidents during the reporting period resulted in multiple fatalities and casualties, [1050] including among police officers attempting to intervene.[1051] In October 2025, authorities arrested 27 suspects following tribal clashes in Thi Qar Governorate,[1052] while in

[1035] Genat M., State Law and Tribal Justice in Iraq, State Law and Tribal Justice in Iraq, March 2023, url, p. 380
[1036] New Region (The), Tribal dispute in Maysan kills 13, 15 November 2025, url; Kurdistan24, Deadly Tribal Clash in Central Iraq Highlights Deep-Rooted Governance and Security Failures, 15 November 2025, url
[1037] New Arab (The), Baghdad tribal clashes kill six, including four police, 7 September 2025, url
[1038] Arif, R. Z., Tribes and Democracy in Iraq—Are Iraqi Tribes a Steppingstone on the Path to Democracy?, Open Journal of Political Science, 16 January 2025, url, p. 256; Kurdistan24, Deadly Tribal Clash in Central Iraq Highlights Deep-Rooted Governance and Security Failures, 15 November 2025, url; New Region (The), Tribal dispute in Maysan kills 13, 15 November 2025, url; Shafaq News, Iraqi Police battle legal gaps and tribal power, 19 September 2025, url;
[1039] Kurdistan24, Deadly Tribal Clash in Central Iraq Highlights Deep-Rooted Governance and Security Failures, 15 November 2025, url; Rudaw, Iraqi forces arrest 27 over tribal clashes in Dhi Qar, 27 October 2025, url; New Arab (The), Baghdad tribal clashes kill six, including four police, 7 September 2025, url; Shafaq News, Iraq security sweep: Tribal violence, child deaths, and Global Coalition withdrawal, 18 January 2026, url; Al Sharqiya, Tribal conflict erupts in central Basra province, 13 May 2026, url
[1040] Kurdistan24, Deadly Tribal Clash in Central Iraq Highlights Deep-Rooted Governance and Security Failures, 15 November 2025, url
[1041] Rudaw, Tribal clash leaves 7 dead in Iraq's Maysan province, 15 November 2025, url; Shafaq News, Iraqi Police battle legal gaps and tribal power, 19 September 2025, url
[1042] Shafaq News, Iraqi Police battle legal gaps and tribal power, 19 September 2025, url; Al Sharqiya, Tribal conflict erupts in central Basra province, 13 May 2026, url
[1043] Kurdistan24, Deadly Tribal Clash in Central Iraq Highlights Deep-Rooted Governance and Security Failures, 15 November 2025, url
[1044] Shafaq News, Iraqi Police battle legal gaps and tribal power, 19 September 2025, url
[1045] Shafaq News, Iraq security sweep: Tribal violence, child deaths, and Global Coalition withdrawal, 18 January 2026, url
[1046] Rudaw, Tribal clash leaves 7 dead in Iraq's Maysan province, 15 November 2025, url; Kurdistan24, Deadly Tribal Clash in Central Iraq Highlights Deep-Rooted Governance and Security Failures, 15 November 2025, url; Amwaj, 'Facebook sheikhs' in focus as Iraqi lawmakers probe 'blood money', 29 August 2024, url
[1047] Rudaw, Five killed in Diwaniyah tribal dispute clash a day after a similar conflict in Basra, 2 April 2025. url; New Region (The), After years of tribal conflicts, Dhi Qar sees decline in violence, 27 May 2025, url; Community Change, Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier: Security and Communal Implications for Iraq, 9 October 2023, url
[1048] Kurdistan24, Deadly Tribal Clash in Central Iraq Highlights Deep-Rooted Governance and Security Failures, 15 November 2025, url
[1049] Kurdistan24, Deadly Tribal Clash in Central Iraq Highlights Deep-Rooted Governance and Security Failures, 15 November 2025, url
[1050] Rudaw, Tribal clash leaves 7 dead in Iraq's Maysan province, 15 November 2025, url; Rudaw, Two policemen killed in Baghdad tribal dispute, 7 September 2025, url; Kurdistan24, Deadly Tribal Clash in Central Iraq Highlights Deep-Rooted Governance and Security Failures, 15 November 2025, url; New Region (The), Tribal dispute in Maysan kills 13, 15 November 2025, url; Shafaq News, Iraq security sweep: Tribal violence, child deaths, and Global Coalition withdrawal, 18 January 2026, url
[1051] Shafaq News, Iraqi Police battle legal gaps and tribal power, 19 September 2025, url; Rudaw, Two policemen killed in Baghdad tribal dispute, 7 September 2025, url; +964, Basra police arrest two tribal sheikhs, 11 others after armed clash, 16 February 2026, url
[1052] Rudaw, Iraqi forces arrest 27 over tribal clashes in Dhi Qar, 27 October 2025, url

November 2025 major clashes in Missan and Wasit governorates reportedly caused numerous deaths and injuries.[1053] In January 2026, another fatal tribal confrontation was reported in the Wadi Hajar area south of Mosul. [1054] In May 2026, five people were injured in an armed tribal clash in Basrah Governorate linked to a longstanding blood feud between two tribes. Security forces intervened to contain the violence.[1055]

At the same time, in 2025, parliamentary committees continued discussions on legislation to regulate tribal settlements (*fasl*) and compensation payments (*diya*), citing concerns about excessive financial demands, coercive practices and the growing influence of self-appointed tribal mediators.[1056] At the same time, Iraqi authorities reiterated that violent tribal practices such as *dakka*[1057] are criminal offences prosecuted under anti-terrorism legislation. [1058]

For information on honour killings, see also section 1.9 Individuals perceived as transgressing moral and Islamic norms and 1.6. Women and girls).

For more information on Blood feuds (thar), see the EUAA COI report Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law Report, April 2023.

2. Humanitarian and socio-economic situation

2.1. Overview of the humanitarian and socio-economic situation

Despite stabilisation and reconstruction efforts, Iraq continues to face significant security, [1059] humanitarian, and development challenges.[1060] While large-scale humanitarian needs have declined compared with previous years and the government has increasingly shifted towards recovery and development, structural vulnerabilities persist.[1061] These include protracted internal displacement, obstacles to the sustainable reintegration of approximately 4.9 million returnees, the continued assistance needs of around 300 000 refugees and asylum

[1053] Rudaw, Tribal clash leaves 7 dead in Iraq's Maysan province, 15 November 2025, url
[1054] Shafaq News, Iraq security sweep: Tribal violence, child deaths, and Global Coalition withdrawal, 18 January 2026, url
[1055] Al Sharqiya, Tribal conflict erupts in central Basra province, 13 May 2026, url
[1056] Amwaj, 'Facebook sheikhs' in focus as Iraqi lawmakers probe 'blood money', 29 August 2024, url
[1057] Dakka is a traditional tribal warning practice involving armed intimidation, including firing weapons at rivals' homes and, in some cases, throwing hand grenades, as a means of pressuring rival families or clans to negotiate. Kurdistan24, Under Terrorism Law, Iraq's Interior Ministry Vows to End Tribal Violence and Monopolize Weapons, 21 December 2025, url; +964, Interior Ministry: tribal 'dakka' attacks prosecuted under anti-terrorism law, 21 December 2025, url
[1058] Rudaw, Iraq warns tribal conflicts and 'Degga' to be prosecuted under anti-terrorism law, 21 December 2025, url
[1059] UNHCR, Summary of UNHCR Iraq Multi-Year Strategy 2025-2029, 16 February 2026, url, p. 2
[1060] UNHCR, Summary of UNHCR Iraq Multi-Year Strategy 2025-2029, 16 February 2026, url, p. 2; CFR Global Conflict Tracker, Instability in Iraq, 18 February 2026, url
[1061] WFP, Draft Iraq country strategic plan (2026–2029). 14 January 2026, url, p. 3

seekers,[1062] regional disparities in access to public services,[1063] and the growing impact of climate change.[1064] Iraq's administrative institutions continue to deliver most basic services;[1065] however, their effectiveness remains uneven[1066] due to governance challenges,[1067] limited institutional capacity,[1068] and persistent inequalities[1069] affecting IDPs, returnees, refugees, rural communities, women, children, and persons with disabilities.[1070]

Although Iraq is classified as an upper middle-income country[1071] and possesses substantial oil and gas resources,[1072] its economy remains highly dependent on hydrocarbons.[1073] Oil accounts for more than 90 % of federal revenues and almost all exports.[1074] This dependence leaves Iraq particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices[1075] and regional instability.[1076] In 2025, declining oil prices placed increasing pressure on public finances, prompting the government to introduce fiscal consolidation measures.[1077] These pressures intensified in 2026 following the regional conflict involving Israel, the US, and Iran.[1078] The ongoing disruption of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, through which most Iraqi oil exports transit, has significantly reduced export capacity and oil production,[1079] while attacks affecting energy infrastructure and trade routes have further disrupted economic activity.[1080] According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Iraq was among the countries in the Middle East and Central Asia most exposed to the economic consequences of these disruptions because of its heavy reliance on oil exports.[1081] In response to the disruption of maritime routes, Iraq shifted toward alternative land-based pipeline routes, enabling southern oil exports to recover to approximately 1.4 million barrels per day by late July.[1082] The Federal Government also implemented significant administrative, fiscal, and operational measures to contain public expenditure, maintain the payment of salaries and social benefits, and preserve economic stability amid these disruptions.[1083] Despite mounting fiscal pressures, the Central

[1062] WFP, Draft Iraq country strategic plan (2026–2029), 14 January 2026, url, p. 1
[1063] IOM, Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2026, 24 February 2026, url, p. 5; BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 8
[1064] UNDP, Country case studies, Operationalizing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus in Iraq, 1 March 2026, url, p. 1
[1065] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 8
[1066] IOM, Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2026, 24 February 2026, url, p. 5 ; BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 8
[1067] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 8; IOM, Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2026, 24 February 2026, url, p. 5
[1068] WFP, Draft Iraq country strategic plan (2026–2029). 14 January 2026, url, p. 3
[1069] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 8; IOM, Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2026, 24 February 2026, url, p. 5
[1070] UNICEF, Country Report – Iraq, February 2026, url, p. 5
[1071] World Bank, Human Capital Data Portal - Iraq, n.d.,url ; World Bank, World Bank Country and Lending Groups, Country classification, n.d., url; UNICEF, Country Report – Iraq, February 2025, url, p. 4
[1072] Stimson, Cybercrime is Iraq's Next Big Challenge, 24 November 2025, url
[1073] H. Al Shakeri, How the war on Iran is exposing Iraq's fundamental failures, 20 March 2026, url; Manara Magazine, Iraq's Oil Shock is Becoming a Payroll Crisis, 25 March 2026, url
[1074] UN Iraq, Annual Results Report 2025, 16 June 2026, url, p. 19; New Region (The), Iraq's Prime Minister Zaidi begins his tenure with little margin for error, 20 May 2026, url; WB, Macro Poverty Outlook, April 2026, url, p. 1
[1075] WFP, Draft Iraq country strategic plan (2026–2029). 14 January 2026, url, p. 3
[1076] WFP, Draft Iraq country strategic plan (2026–2029). 14 January 2026, url, p. 3
[1077] EPIC, Ten Key Stories to Watch in Iraq in 2026, 1 January 2026, url
[1078] H. Al Shakeri, How the war on Iran is exposing Iraq's fundamental failures, 20 March 2026, url; AP News, Iraq's oil hub slows to a crawl as Strait of Hormuz shutdown strangles exports, 2 April 2026, url
[1079] WB, Macro Poverty Outlook, April 2026, url, p. 1; H. Al Shakeri, How the war on Iran is exposing Iraq's fundamental failures, 20 March 2026, url
[1080] AP News, Iraq's oil hub slows to a crawl as Strait of Hormuz shutdown strangles exports, 2 April 2026, url
[1081] INA, IMF expects severe contraction in Iraq's economy in 2026, 9 July 2026, url
[1082] WFP, Country Brief – Iraq, August 2026, 3 September 2026, url, p. 2
[1083] WFP, Country Brief – Iraq, August 2026, 3 September 2026, url, p. 2

Bank of Iraq continues to maintain substantial foreign exchange reserves, providing a degree of short-term macroeconomic resilience.[1084]

The economy remains dominated by the public sector,[1085] while private sector development is limited[1086] and informal employment accounts for a significant proportion of the labour market.[1087] Overall, Iraq recorded an unemployment rate of 13.5 % and a labour force participation rate of 38 %, both less favourable than the regional average.[1088] High unemployment, particularly among young people[1089] and women,[1090] limited labour force participation,[1091] and weak job creation continue to pose socio-economic challenges. Youth unemployment stands at 35.8 % and female labour force participation remains among the lowest globally, at approximately 10.6 %.[1092] Governance is further affected by corruption, political instability, weak institutional capacity and limited progress in structural reforms.[1093] Corruption in the public sector and among political officials continues to affect all aspects of life, undermining governance and public service delivery. Failure to enforce safety regulations due to corruption within local authorities contributed to fatal fires in hospitals and shopping centres, resulting in dozens of deaths, including infants.[1094] Due to the long-standing financial dispute over budget allocations, oil exports, and non-oil revenues, salary payments to public-sector employees in the KRI have repeatedly been delayed. Baghdad has continued to delay the payment of salaries to civil servants in the KRI, with the federal government reportedly withholding salary payments for several months in recent years, including November and December of the previous year. According to data from the KRG, Baghdad allocated only 42 % of the Kurdistan Region's budget share over the past seven years, resulting in the withholding of more than USD 36.6 billion.[1095]

Around 11 % of the population experiences multidimensional poverty,[1096] including nearly half of all children (approximately 8 million).[1097] Significant regional disparities in poverty persist across Iraq. The southern governorates consistently record higher poverty rates than the KRI,[1098] while several southern and western governorates continue to experience poverty levels above the national average.[1099]

[1084] WB, Macro Poverty Outlook, April 2026, url, p. 2
[1085] UN Iraq, Annual Results Report 2025, 16 June 2026, url, p. 19
[1086] WB, Macro Poverty Outlook, April 2026, url, p. 1
[1087] UN Iraq, Annual Results Report 2025, 16 June 2026, url, p. 19
[1088] WB, Macro Poverty Outlook, April 2026, url, p. 1
[1089] WB, Macro Poverty Outlook, April 2026, url, p. 1
[1090] WB, Unemployment, female (% of female labor force) (modeled ILO estimate) – Iraq, url
[1091] WB, Macro Poverty Outlook, April 2026, url, p. 1
[1092] UN Iraq, Annual Results Report 2025, 16 June 2026, url, p. 19
[1093] IOM, Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2026, 24 February 2026, url, p. 5
[1094] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 208
[1095] New Region (The), KRG says Baghdad sent only 42% of budget share in seven years, 25 June 2026, url: Shafaq News, KRG: Baghdad underfunded Kurdistan salaries by ~$60 million, 26 May 2026, url
[1096] Multidimensional poverty refers to poverty understood as deprivation across multiple dimensions of well-being, rather than monetary deprivation alone. The World Bank's Multidimensional Poverty Measure incorporates three dimensions—monetary poverty, education, and access to basic infrastructure services—to provide a broader measure of poverty. WB, Multidimensional Poverty Measure, n.d., url; WFP, Draft Iraq country strategic plan (2026–2029), 14 January 2026, url, p. 3
[1097] WFP, Draft Iraq country strategic plan (2026–2029), 14 January 2026, url, p. 3
[1098] WB, Poverty and Equity Brief – Iraq, October 2025, url, p. 1
[1099] UN Iraq, Annual Results Report 2025, 16 June 2026, url, p. 19

Iraq has continued to operate two principal social assistance programmes, namely the Public Distribution System (PDS) and the Social Safety Net (SSN),[1100] with the PDS providing food assistance to most of the population and the SSN supporting approximately 7.6 million beneficiaries. Nevertheless, administrative weaknesses and outdated information systems continue to limit the effectiveness of social protection.[1101] Although inflation and food prices have been subdued, income disparities, widespread informal employment, and limited social and food assistance continue to constrain purchasing power and access to healthy diets, particularly among households reliant on low-diversity PDS rations and casual labour. Combined with poverty, unemployment, displacement, limited opportunities for women, weak public services, and climate-related risks, these factors continue to undermine food security.[1102]

Food insecurity remains driven by recurrent drought, desertification, rising temperatures, declining water flows in the Tigris and Euphrates rivers,[1103] and Iraq's dependence on imported food.[1104] Heightened regional tensions have further exacerbated these vulnerabilities, as disruptions to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz threatened food import supply chains and increased transportation costs.[1105] At the same time, the Public Distribution System (PDS) and agricultural support programmes remain heavily dependent on oil revenues. Any disruption to oil income is therefore expected to constrain the government's capacity to finance food security programmes, contributing to higher food prices, increased import costs, and reduced access to affordable food, particularly for vulnerable households.[1106] Climate change also continue to undermine agricultural production,[1107] livelihoods[1108] and water availability,[1109] contributing to internal displacement and increasing pressure on urban areas.[1110]

Basic sanitation is almost universal at 98.5 %, yet only 52.8 % of population has access to safely managed sanitation.[1111] Access to healthcare remains constrained despite continued government investment and the expansion of health infrastructure, including the opening of new hospitals[1112] and the rollout of national health insurance.[1113] The health system continues to face shortages of medicines,[1114] qualified healthcare personnel and infrastructure, while

[1100] NRC, Legal guide to child's rights in Iraq, November 2024, url, p. 32
[1101] UNICEF, Country Report – Iraq, February 2026, url, p. 5
[1102] WFP, Draft Country Strategic Plan (2026-2029), 14 January 2026, url, p. 5
[1103] ICBA, WFP, WFP and ICBA partner to strengthen water governance and climate-smart agriculture for food security, 9 July 2026, url
[1104] WB, Macro Poverty Outlook, April 2026, url, p. 2
[1105] Manara Magazine, Iraq's Oil Shock is Becoming a Payroll Crisis, 25 March 2026, url
[1106] FAO, WFP, Agriculture and food security in Iraq, Information Note, April 2026, url, p. 2
[1107] WFP, WFP Iraq Country Brief, April 2026 (Reporting Period: February and March 2026), 3 May 2026, url
[1108] UNDP, Climate Vulnerability Index of Iraq, Summary Report, 2025, 18 September 2025, url, p. 24
[1109] I. A. Majed, Weaponizing Water: Forced Evictions and Ecocide in the Iraqi Marshlands, 20 May 2026, url, pp. 15-17
[1110] WFP, WFP Iraq Country Brief, April 2026 (Reporting Period: February and March 2026), 3 May 2026, url; AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url
[1111] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 8
[1112] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 9
[1113] Rudaw, 2.5 million Iraqis now covered under national health insurance: minister, 15 November 2025, url; Shafaq News, Iraq's health system struggles to keep pace with population growth, 14 July 2026, url
[1114] Hasan A. Shubbar et. al,, Understanding Medicine Need Estimation within the Public Healthcare System in Iraq: A Review Article, Iraqi Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences, 29 March 2026, url, p. 1

decades of conflict,[1115] underinvestment, governance challenges[1116] and rapid population growth placed increasing pressure on service delivery.[1117] Access to quality healthcare remains uneven, particularly for IDPs[1118] and populations in underserved areas,[1119] including Ninewa, where reconstruction has yet to fully restore healthcare capacity.[1120] In addition, underfunding, corruption, and inefficiencies in medicine procurement continue to undermine the quality of public healthcare services.[1121] IDPs in the camps access health services through government-supported primary healthcare clinics, although service delivery continue to be constrained by shortages of essential medicines, inadequate staffing, particularly of female health professionals, and limited mental health services.[1122]

As of end of July 2026, Iraq hosted over 343 000 refugees and asylum-seekers, 88 % of whom were from Syria. Close to 80 % of refugees and asylum seekers lived in the KRI. Among them, roughly 30 % were living in nine formal refugee camps,[1123] while the rest lived outside camps, for example, in towns and urban areas.[1124] Iraq is not party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.[1125]

Although access to electricity and basic water and sanitation services is widespread nationally, Iraq continues to experience frequent power cuts,[1126] water scarcity, deteriorating water quality, ageing infrastructure,[1127] and housing shortages.[1128] Access to safely managed drinking water and sanitation improved during 2025, but significant regional disparities persisted, particularly affecting rural communities, returnees and IDPs.[1129] According to UN-Habitat, Iraq currently faces a housing deficit of approximately 2.5 to 3.5 million units. Bridging this gap over the medium term will be essential to accommodate continued population growth and rapid urbanisation.[1130] The government has responded by increasing residential construction and developing new housing projects. In May 2026, Iraq's Ministry of Construction and Housing reported that construction was underway on 14 residential

[1115] IOM, Enhancing Health Care for IDPs in Iraq's Informal Sites, n.d., url; BasNews, Experts Warn Of Worsening Healthcare Crisis in Iraq, 11 July 2026, url
[1116] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 9
[1117] Shafaq News, Iraq's healthcare system nears collapse: Doctors leave, hospitals overflow, 22 December 2025, url; Iraqi News, PM Sudani highlights health sector progress as Iraq opens 22 hospitals in three years, 24 November 2025, url; Shafaq News, Iraq's health system struggles to keep pace with population growth, 14 July 2026, url
[1118] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq (As of June 2026), 9 August 2026, url, p. 3; Netherlands (The), , Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Thematisch ambtsbericht Irak November 2025, 7 November 2025, url, p. 11
[1119] Shafaq News, Iraq's healthcare system nears collapse: Doctors leave, hospitals overflow, 22 December 2025, url
[1120] Shafaq News, Iraq's health system struggles to keep pace with population growth, 14 July 2026, url
[1121] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 9
[1122] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq - As of December 2025, 6 January 2026, url, p. 2
[1123] UNHCR, Iraq monthly update July 2026, 17 August 2026, url
[1124] UNHCR, UNHCR Iraq Achievements 2025, 1 June 2026, url
[1125] UNHCR, Iraq- Country context, n.d., url
[1126] BTI, 2026 Country Report Iraq, 2026, url, p. 8
[1127] UNICEF, Country Report – Iraq, February 2026, url, p. 12
[1128] IOM, Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2026, 24 February 2026, url, p. 5
[1129] UNICEF, Country Report – Iraq, February 2026, url, p. 5
[1130] UN in Iraq, Remarks by DSRSG/RC for Iraq, Ghulam Isaczai, at the launch of the Iraq National Housing Policy, 13 October 2025, url

complexes across several provinces, alongside plans for 16 new residential cities.[1131] Nevertheless, Iraq's housing challenges increasingly reflect issues of affordability rather than simply a shortage of housing units. Despite increased construction activity and major development projects, high property prices, limited access to mortgage financing, and reliance on personal savings or family financing may constrain the ability of some middle-income Iraqis to purchase homes. In Erbil, for example, even relatively well-paid professionals may require several years of saving to afford a down payment, highlighting the gap between housing costs and household purchasing power.[1132]

(a) Impact of climate change

Iraq is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change, ranking among the 15 countries most affected globally[1133] and fifth in vulnerability according to UNEP's Global Environment Outlook 6 (GEO-6).[1134] Its high vulnerability to climate change[1135] reflects the combined effects of geographical, environmental and socio-economic factors, which limit the country's capacity to adapt to climate-related shocks.[1136] Iraq continues to experience rising temperatures, declining and erratic rainfall, prolonged droughts, water scarcity, desertification, salinisation,[1137] recurrent flooding,[1138] and increasingly frequent sand and dust storms.[1139] Reduced water flows in the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and worsening soil salinity have degraded around 12 million hectares (approximately 120 000 km^2) of arable land, undermining agricultural production.[1140]

Climate change has contributed to crop failures, drinking water shortages,[1141] declining agricultural productivity[1142] and heightened food insecurity,[1143] particularly in rural areas.[1144] Agriculture, Iraq's second-largest economic sector after hydrocarbons,[1145] has been particularly affected,[1146] while limited arable land per capita further exacerbates food and water

[1131] Shafaq News, About 16 new residential cities target Iraq's housing shortage, 23 May 2026, url
[1132] Amwaj, Iraq's housing boom is leaving its aspirational class behind, 27 August 2026, url
[1133] Rudaw, Iraq among top 15 countries most affected by climate change: PM advisor, 27 February 2025, url
[1134] UN Iraq, Annual Results Report 2025, url, 19 June 2026, p. 20; IOM, Migration, Environment, and Climate Change In Iraq, 9 August 2022, url, p. 5
[1135] UNDP, Climate Vulnerability Index of Iraq, Summary Report, 2025, url, 18 September 2025, p. 1; UN, Executive Board of the UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, Country Programme for Iraq, 4 November 2024, url, para 1
[1136] UNDP, Climate Vulnerability Index of Iraq, Summary Report, 2025, url, 18 September 2025, p. 1
[1137] UN Iraq, Annual Results Report 2025, url, 19 June 2026, p. 20; Rudaw, Severe dust storm hospitalizes 84 people in Kirkuk, 20 September 2025, url
[1138] UNDP, Climate Vulnerability Index of Iraq, Summary Report, 2025, url, 18 September 2025, p. 1
[1139] UN Iraq, Annual Results Report 2025, url, 19 June 2026, p. 20; Rudaw, Severe dust storm hospitalizes 84 people in Kirkuk, 20 September 2025, url
[1140] WFP, Iraq – Country Briefing, March 2025, url
[1141] UNDP, Climate Vulnerability Index of Iraq, Summary Report, 2025, url, 18 September 2025, p. 25
[1142] UNDP, Climate Vulnerability Index of Iraq, Summary Report, 2025, url, 18 September 2025, p. 25
[1143] UNDP, Climate Vulnerability Index of Iraq, Summary Report, 2025, url, 18 September 2025, p. 25
[1144] WFP, WFP Iraq Country Brief, April 2026 (Reporting Period: February and March 2026), 3 May 2026, url; WFP, Iraq – Country Briefing, March 2025, url
[1145] UNDP, Climate Vulnerability Index of Iraq, Summary Report, 2025, url, 18 September 2025, p. 28; Georgetown Security Studies Review, Drought in the Land of Plenty: The Impacts of Climate Change on Iraqi Security, 18 January 2025, url
[1146] WFP, WFP Iraq Country Brief, April 2026 (Reporting Period: February and March 2026), 3 May 2026, url

insecurity,[1147] driving rural-to-urban migration[1148] and placing additional pressure on urban infrastructure and public services.[1149] Climate-related pressures have also increased displacement, competition over natural resources, and social tensions.[1150] Limited access to agricultural land and irrigation continued to affect returnees and IDPs, particularly in the southern governorates of Thi Qar and Missan.[1151] Climate change has disproportionately affected vulnerable populations, including rural communities,[1152] IDPs,[1153] disadvantaged women,[1154] residents of southern Iraq,[1155] communities in the Mesopotamian Marshes[1156] and those living in areas surrounding oil fields.[1157] Thi Qar, Basrah, and Qadissiya were identified among the governorates most vulnerable to climate change.[1158] Iraq's southern wetlands, collectively known as the Mesopotamian Marshes, continue to face a severe environmental and humanitarian crisis driven by reduced water inflows, drought and deteriorating water quality, resulting in the loss of livelihoods, agricultural production and biodiversity.[1159] The expansion of oil extraction in the wetlands has also placed additional pressure on already scarce water resources, particularly through the industry's substantial water requirements. In the context of increasing drought, desertification, and declining water availability, the interaction between oil production, water use, and broader environmental degradation presents a significant challenge for the sustainability of the Mesopotamian Marshes and the livelihoods of communities that depend on them.[1160]

Environmental degradation has also adversely affected public health.[1161] Air and water pollution, compounded by climate-related hazards, have contributed to respiratory, cardiovascular and gastrointestinal illnesses. In Baghdad, poor air quality has been linked to emissions from industrial activities, private generators, refineries, waste burning and recurring dust storms, while in Basrah and other southern governorates increasing water salinity, pollution and weak water governance have further reduced access to safe drinking water.[1162] Children in Iraq have been disproportionately affected by climate change[1163] and the

[1147] WFP, WFP Iraq Country Brief, April 2026 (Reporting Period: February and March 2026), 3 May 2026, url
[1148] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 10; UN in Iraq, Advocacy Note | Water Scarcity and Climate Risks in Iraq, 20 January 2026, url
[1149] UNDP, Climate Vulnerability Index of Iraq, Summary Report, 2025, 18 September 2025, url, p. 26
[1150] UNDP, Climate Vulnerability Index of Iraq, Summary Report, 2025, url, 18 September 2025, p. 1
[1151] Rudaw, Climate change displaces over 17,000 Iraqi families in five years, 3 December 2025, url
[1152] WFP, WFP Iraq Country Brief, April 2026 (Reporting Period: February and March 2026), 3 May 2026, url; WFP, Iraq – Country Briefing, March 2025, url
[1153] AI, The State's of World Human Rights, April 2025, url, p. 66; CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 20 May 2026, url, para 45
[1154] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 20 May 2026, url, para 45
[1155] UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024) Report of the Secretary-General, 30 May 2025, url, para 33
[1156] WFP, Iraq Annual Country Report 2024 Country Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025, 5 February 2025, url, p. 26; ICRC, Iraq: Water, Life, and the Fight Against Climate, 22 March 2025, url
[1157] UNDP, Executive Board of the UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, Country Programme for Iraq, 29 November 2024, url, para. 27
[1158] UNDP, Climate Vulnerability Index of Iraq, Summary Report, 2025, url, 18 September 2025, p. 20
[1159] I. A. Majed, Weaponizing Water: Forced Evictions and Ecocide in the Iraqi Marshlands, 20 May 2026, url, pp. 15-17
[1160] Guardian (The), 'It's destruction disguised as progress': how the oil industry is sucking Iraq's ancient wetlands Dry, 13 August 2025, url
[1161] UNDP, Climate Vulnerability Index of Iraq, Summary Report, 2025, url, 18 September 2025, p. 25
[1162] UN, Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, url; Rudaw, UN warns Iraq's water crisis endangering children's future, 21 November 2025, url
[1163] UNICEF, Country Report – Iraq, February 2026, url, p. 5

worsening water crisis,[1164] with 99 % exposed to extreme heat, 31.6 % to agricultural drought, and 26.8 % to sand and dust storms.[1165] UNICEF has warned that environmental degradation and water scarcity threaten children's health and future, with reduced water quality increasing the risk of water-borne diseases and inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) systems disrupting the functioning of schools and healthcare facilities. [1166]

2.2. Update on 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.[1167] For individuals to obtain residency in a certain area, valid documents (Unified ID card) is required.[1168]

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 access the full range of rights and basic services,[1169] 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.[1170] 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.[1171] The General Directorate for Nationality of the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for the issuance of the Housing Card. Local residence offices are responsible for updating household address registrations under the National Card Law (2016, Chapter 3), and the head of the household must generally report any permanent move, including a move within the same city, within 30 days.[1172] 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

[1164] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 20 May 2026, url, para 45
[1165] UNICEF, Country Report – Iraq, February 2026, url, p. 5
[1166] CEDAW, Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, 20 May 2026, url, para. 45
[1167] UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 17 August 2026
[1168] 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
[1169] 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, 17 August 2026
[1170] 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
[1171] UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 17 August 2026
[1172] Norway, Landinfo, Sivilregister, ID-dokumenter og pass, 2 March 2026, url, p. 19

Instructions on the Housing Card (2018). In practice, the implementation of these instructions can vary.[1173]

In order to pass checkpoints and be admitted to the area they intend to enter, individuals are required to hold valid civil documentation (Unified ID card or passport). Civil Status ID cards and nationality certificates are no longer in use. As of 1 April 2024, the Iraqi Ministry of Interior announced the end of the use of the Civil Status Identity Card following the roll-out of the Unified ID system.[1174] Iraq's civil registry has been fully digitalised. New personal data have been collected in a digital register and the former handwritten family books have been scanned and retained in a central archive. The transition from the analogue to the digital system began in 2015 and was completed in 2024.[1175] By April 2026, Iraqi authorities reported that more than 48 million Iraqi citizens have been registered under the Unified National ID Card, while 51 634 739 cards have been printed.[1176] Movement restrictions, security clearance requirements, checkpoints, and the presence of armed actors continue to constrain mobility in certain areas.[1177] Security screenings in the country remain in place at governorate, district, and city entrance checkpoints.[1178]

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 Haditha, Al-Qaim, and Heet (Anbar); Al-Daur and Balad (Salah Al-Din), Al-Saadiyah Sub-District, northern Muqdadiyah 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.[1179] Furthermore, the individual requires the approval (through a confirmation/recommendation/support letter) of the relevant local authority, such as the *mukhtar*, the local council or the mayor. In some governorates and cities, authorities require a sponsor holding a Housing Card from the area where the individuals are seeking to legally take up temporary residency. These are: Diyala, Dohuk, Haditha and Heet Districts, Rawa Sub-District (Anbar), Samarra (Salah Al Din governorate), and all of the southern governorates. In Baghdad and in Al-Qaim District (Anbar), two sponsors are required.[1180] Further, the individuals - regardless of their profile or origin - need approval from the security actors of the area where

[1173] 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, 4 May 2024;. For more information on such requirements, see UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, url, pp. 7-8
[1174] MOFA, Question and Answers, 4 May 2025, url; UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 17 August 2026
[1175] Norway, Landinfo, Sivilregister, ID-dokumenter og pass, 2 March 2026, url, p. 4
[1176] INA, العراق يسجل أكثر من 48 مليون مواطن ضمن مشروع البطاقة الوطنية الموحدة, [Iraq registers more than 48 million citizens under the Unified National Card project], 4 April 2026, url
[1177] IRC, Protection Needs Overview: Monitoring and Trends, April – September 2025, 20 January 2026, url, p. 18
[1178] UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 17 August 2026; UNHCR, Ability of Iraqis to Legally Access and Settle Durably in Proposed Areas of Internal Relocation, November 2022, url, p. 4
[1179] UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 17 August 2026
[1180] UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 17 August 2026

they are to relocate, normally from the Ministry of Interior Intelligence Department in Federal Iraq and the *Asayish* in the KRI.[1181]

As part of the process, the residence authorities may verify that the household is actually residing at the new address, including through a visit to the new residence. Once the requirements have been met, the household is registered at the new address, and the previous registration is closed or updated.[1182]

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 due to affiliation to ISIL, as well as for individuals who are perceived to have ISIL affiliation based on similar surnames with people on wanted list);[1183]
- 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: Kurds who originate from the disputed territories, Arabs, Turkmen and members of ethnic/religious minority groups from areas outside the KRI; in Sulaymaniyah: single Arab and Turkmen men and women,[1184] also Kurds and Yazidis originating from the disputed territories are not allowed to transfer their Housing Card to Sulaymaniyah. They are able to obtain a support letter from the *mukhtar* confirming that they are living in those areas).[1185]

2.3. Situation of the IDPs

As of 31 December 2025, there were approximately 997 300 conflict-induced IDPs in Iraq, a decrease of about 34 100 persons compared to the previous data collection period

[1181] 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, 17 August 2026
[1182] Norway, Landinfo, Sivilregister, ID-dokumenter og pass, 2 March 2026, url, p. 19
[1183] 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, 17 August 2026
[1184] 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, 17 August 2026
[1185] UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 17 August 2026

(September – December 2024).[1186] More recent data on IDP numbers was not available as of mid-2026.[1187] Of the total number of IDPs, 97 271 individuals resided in 18[1188] formal IDP camps located in the KRI. Of the camp population, 18 763 IDP families (89 709 individuals) remained in 13 camps in Dohuk Governorate and Zakho Administration, 875 families (4 368 individuals) remained in two camps in Erbil Governorate, and 675 families (3 194 individuals) remained in the three East Mosul Camps (EMCs).[1189] The majority of IDPs continued to live outside camps, primarily in private accommodation,[1190] mainly in the northern governorates of Ninewa, Dohuk, and Erbil.[1191] Approximately 81 234 individuals continued to reside in critical shelters.[1192] Of the one million internally displaced, 295 602 IDPs live in difficult conditions, and most of them have been displaced for over seven years.[1193]

The situation across IDP camps in Iraq in 2026 has remained largely stagnant.[1194] Living conditions deteriorated in several camps[1195] in the KRI, where access to essential services such as healthcare, water, and housing remains constrained.[1196] Basic services continued to be provided primarily by government authorities, with limited support from humanitarian organisations, UN agencies, and ad hoc private donations,[1197] while humanitarian assistance continued to decline.[1198] No food assistance had been provided in IDP camps since the beginning of 2026.[1199] Conditions in the East Mosul Camps remained more challenging than in other camps. Restrictions on movement prevented residents from leaving the camps, leaving them dependent on inadequate and unreliable camp services. Women and children continued to be disproportionately affected.[1200] In camps in Dohuk Governorate, including Khanke, Essyan, Sharia, Kabarto I and Kabarto II, living conditions were reportedly deteriorating, with displaced persons reporting reduced access to essential services and increasingly difficult humanitarian conditions.[1201]

[1186] IOM Iraq, Iraq Master List Report 135. Data Collection Period: September – December 2025, March 2026, url, pp. 1-2
[1187] UNHCR and IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq (As of June 2026), 9 August 2026, url, p. 1
[1188] As of February 2026, UNHCR, together with the Iraqi authorities, had agreed to administratively consolidate four IDP camps into two camps in Duhok Governorate. Bersive 1 and Bersive 2 were consolidated and are now referred to as Bersive, while Karbato 1 and 2 were consolidated and are now referred to as Karbato. As a result, the number of officially recognised IDP camps in Iraq decreased to 18, although the overall camp population remained unchanged; UNHCR, UNHCR, Iraq Monthly Update - April 2026, 1 June 2026, url, p. 1
[1189] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 1
[1190] IOM, DTM, Displacement Dashboard, 31 December 2025, url
[1191] IOM, DTM, Iraq – Displacement overview, 31 December 2025, url
[1192] IOM, Displacement Dashboard, 31 December 2025, url
[1193] IOM, Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2025, url, p. 5
[1194] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 1
[1195] Netherlands (The), , Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Thematisch ambtsbericht Irak November 2025, 7 November 2025, url, p. 11; UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 26 April 2026, url, p. 1
[1196] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2024, 29 April 2026, url, p. 68
[1197] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 26 April 2026, url, p. 1; UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 1
[1198] Netherlands (The), , Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Thematisch ambtsbericht Irak November 2025, 7 November 2025, url, p. 11
[1199] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 26 April 2026, url, p. 2
[1200] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 26 April 2026, url, p. 1
[1201] Netherlands (The), , Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Thematisch ambtsbericht Irak November 2025, 7 November 2025, url, p. 11

Although the Government of Iraq indefinitely postponed the planned closure of IDP camps announced for July 2024,[1202] government services remained in place.[1203] As a consequence, gaps in the provision of healthcare, psychosocial support and other essential services reportedly widened in several camps, [1204] placing additional pressure on public services, particularly in the health and education sectors.[1205] Government-supported primary healthcare services remained available in most camps; however, significant shortcomings persisted, including shortages of essential medicines, limited mental health and psychosocial support, and insufficient staffing, particularly of female healthcare professionals.[1206] Mental health issues remained widespread among IDPs, while access to mental health services continued to be severely limited throughout Iraq.[1207]

IDPs more broadly continued to experience deteriorating living conditions[1208] amid protracted displacement,[1209] with persistent difficulties in accessing adequate housing, healthcare,[1210] and safe water.[1211] The factors contributing to protracted internal displacement in Iraq have increasingly shifted from the original conflict-related drivers to persistent barriers to sustainable return and reintegration. These include damaged or inadequate housing, unresolved housing, land and property disputes, limited livelihood opportunities, inadequate access to basic services, insecurity,[1212] social tensions and stigma,[1213] and difficulties obtaining civil documentation.[1214] In particular, difficulties obtaining the Unified National ID Card (UNID)[1215] restrict the access to essential public services, freedom of movement and employment,[1216] particularly for persons perceived to have links to ISIL and female-headed households[1217] (see sections 1.4.2 Individuals with (perceived) affiliation to ISIL and 1.7.6 Access to education).Climate-related pressures, including water scarcity, land degradation, declining agricultural productivity and salinity, are also contributing to displacement and undermining livelihoods in affected areas[1218] (see section 2.3.2 Situation of returnees).

[1202] UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024) Report of the Secretary-General, 30 May 2025, url, para 34; EC, Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) IRAQ, 13 December 2024, url, pp. 4-5
[1203] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 26 April 2026, url, pp. 2-3
[1204] Netherlands (The), , Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Thematisch ambtsbericht Irak November 2025, 7 November 2025, url, p. 11
[1205] Kurdistan24, Kurdistan Region Remains Safe Haven for Refugees Despite Mounting Pressures, Interior Minister Says, 20 June 2026, url
[1206] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 26 April 2026, url, pp. 2-3
[1207] IOM, Mental health and psychosocial support needs assessment in Basra – Iraq, 2025, url, p. 8
[1208] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2024, 29 April 2026, url, p. 68; Amargi, The endless displacement of Yazidi genocide survivors, 1 October 2025, url
[1209] Amargi, The endless displacement of Yazidi genocide survivors, 1 October 2025, url
[1210] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2024, 29 April 2026, url, p. 68; UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 26 April 2026, url, pp. 2-3
[1211] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 26 April 2026, url, pp. 2-3
[1212] UNHCR, Multi-year Strategy 2025 – 2029 – Iraq, November 2025, url, p. 5; UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 1
[1213] UNIDIR, From Al Hol to hope: Navigating return and reintegration challenges, 15 August 2024, url, pp. 8-9, 21; IOM, Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2025, February 2025, url, pp. 5-6; UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 5
[1214] IOM, Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2025, February 2025, url, pp. 5-6
[1215] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 1
[1216] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2024, 29 April 2026, url
[1217] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 26 April 2026, url, p. 3
[1218] IOM, Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2026, 17 June 2026, url, p. 5

Since 12 July 2024, the government-supported procedures for registering IDPs wishing to leave camps and facilitating their departure have remained suspended.[1219] The Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) has not resumed its departure-registration services.[1220]As of June 2026, IOM remains the only formal mechanism through which IDPs can leave the camps.[1221] Separately, IOM implements the Facilitated Voluntary Movement (FVM) programme, which supports IDPs who voluntarily choose to leave displacement sites and return to their areas of origin or relocate elsewhere.[1222] Following a suspension pending approval from regional authorities to access camps and informal sites, IOM received the necessary approvals in late November 2025 to resume the programme.[1223] As of June 2026, FVM constitutes the only formal mechanism reported to facilitate IDP departures from camps.[1224] Since the beginning of 2026, 639 households, comprising approximately 3 834 individuals, have returned, relocated, or locally integrated in various areas of Iraq through IOM's FVM programme.[1225] Approximately 1 500 families departed from IDP camps in 2025. The majority reportedly returned to their areas of origin in Ninewa Governorate, particularly in the districts of Al-Ba'aj District and Sinjar District.[1226] Departures from such camps in 2025 were slower compared with 2024[1227] and in 2026 remained limited while small numbers of families continued to seek admission to the camps.[1228] A limited number of IDPs (23 families, 107 individuals) have returned to camps in Dohuk since the beginning of 2026 due to challenges in sustaining their return and reintegrating into their areas of origin.[1229]

Sustainable returns continued to be hindered by persistent insecurity,[1230] limited reconstruction, inadequate public services,[1231] lack of livelihood opportunities,[1232] delays in compensation for conflict victims,[1233] and unresolved housing, land and property issues.[1234] The

[1219] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 1
[1220] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 1
[1221] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 1
[1222] IOM, Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2025, February 2026, url, p. 22; UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 6 January 2026, url, p. 1
[1223] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 6 January 2026, url, p. 1
[1224] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 26 April 2026, url, p. 1
[1225] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 1
[1226] UNHCR Iraq, Internally Displaced People, n.d., url; IOM/UNHCR, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq (As of December 2025), 6 January 2026, url
[1227] UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024) Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para 43
[1228] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 1
[1229] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 1
[1230] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 5; UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 26 April 2026, url, p. 2; UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, As of December 2025, 6 January 2026, url, p. 1
[1231] IOM, UNHCR, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq (As of June 2026), 9 August 2026, url, p. 4; Rudaw, Over 3,000 displaced Iraqis yet to receive incentive cash despite return, 6 September 2025, url
[1232] IOM, UNHCR, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq (As of June 2026), 9 August 2026, url, p. 4
[1233] KirkukNow, Nineveh Completes 145 Stalled Projects, Reconstruction and Return of Displaced Remain Hindered, 21 June 2026, url
[1234] KirkukNow, Nineveh Completes 145 Stalled Projects, Reconstruction and Return of Displaced Remain Hindered, 21 June 2026, url

suspension of return grants since October 2024 and delays in the payment of compensation further undermined efforts to achieve sustainable returns, including for Yazidi families.[1235]

According to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs report, a significant proportion of IDPs returning to Sinjar continued to experience difficult living conditions, with approximately 88 % living in severe conditions.[1236] Reconstruction in Sinjar remained constrained by insufficient federal funding and ongoing political and security-related obstacles, while delays in compensation and the lack of security and essential services continued to impede the return of approximately 200 000 IDPs.[1237] Those wishing to return also continued to face difficulties obtaining civil documentation,[1238] especially for female-headed households.[1239]

In August 2025, Iraq's Higher Committee for Relief and Support of Displaced Persons discussed considering families remaining in IDP camps as integrated and settled within society, with a view to permanently closing the displacement file by the end of 2025. The proposal was opposed by the KRG, which maintained that many IDPs were unable to return because secure, stable and dignified conditions had not been established in their areas of origin, including adequate security and access to essential services.[1240] The proposed closure of the displacement file did not, however, materialise by the time of writing this report and UNHCR reported that progress towards durable solutions remained limited in 2025, while persistent security concerns and limited services remained major barriers to return.[1241] As an anonymous source observed, most programmes relating to displacement and social cohesion had either concluded or were in the process of winding down, with only limited interventions continuing in areas with significant minority populations, particularly Ninewa and Sinjar.[1242] Ongoing regional instability, particularly affecting Erbil and Dohuk, also affected IDPs. Baharka camp, owing to its proximity to Erbil International Airport, was also considered at increased risk from falling debris associated with security incidents.[1243]

2.3.1. Climate change-induced displacement

Climate-related displacement has become an increasingly significant driver of displacement in Iraq. According to Iraq's Ministry of Migration and Displacement, approximately 17 365 families had been displaced by climate change and desertification since 2021, with the largest numbers originating from Thi Qar (9 525 families), followed by Qadissiya (2 823), Muthanna (1 668), Missan (1 643), Basrah (951), Najaf (742), and Wasit (13).[1244] Local authorities in Thi Qar

[1235] UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024) Report of the Secretary-General, 20 November 2025, url, para 44
[1236] Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Thematisch ambtsbericht Irak November 2025, 7 November 2025, url, p. 7
[1237] KirkukNow, Nineveh Completes 145 Stalled Projects, Reconstruction and Return of Displaced Remain Hindered, 21 June 2026, url
[1238] IOM, UNHCR, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq (As of June 2026), 9 August 2026, url, p. 4; UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 26 April 2026, url, p. 3
[1239] IOM, UNHCR, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq (As of June 2026), 9 August 2026, url; UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 26 April 2026, url, p. 3
[1240] Rudaw, KRG accuses Baghdad of changing demography of Christian, Yazidi areas21 August 2025, url: KRG, KRG Condemns Unlawful Demographic Changes and Urges Voluntary Return of IDPs, 21 August 2025, url
[1241] UNHCR, Internally Displaced People, n.d., url
[1242] Anonymous source, interview with EUAA, 26 June 2026
[1243] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 26 April 2026, url, p. 1
[1244] Rudaw, Climate change displaces over 17,000 Iraqi families in five years, 3 December 2025, url

reported that the drying of the northern marshlands had significantly contributed to displacement, with only limited possibilities for restoring water supplies.[1245] In Basrah, Thi Qar, Missan, and Muthanna, shortages of safe water continued to force thousands of families to leave their homes[1246] (see section 2.1 on Impact of climate change).

A broader assessment by IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) identified 31 001 families (186 006 individuals),[1247] who remained displaced due to climate-related factors, as of September 2025 across 12 governorates in central and southern Iraq.[1248] Displacement was concentrated primarily in the southern governorates of Thi Qar, Missan, and Qadissiya. Approximately 63 % of those displaced had moved from rural to urban areas. Around 1 800 families were living in temporary or makeshift shelters, while many others relied on informal housing arrangements without secure tenure or legal authorisation to occupy the land on which they lived.[1249] Climate-induced displacement in central and southern Iraq continued to increase as a result of drought and environmental degradation, with many displaced persons settling in informal urban areas.[1250]

Climate-displaced populations continued to face significant protection and socioeconomic vulnerabilities. Amnesty International reported that Iraqi authorities did not provide financial assistance or other forms of support to climate-displaced populations, leaving many households to rely on their own limited resources to meet their basic needs.[1251] Although these populations received less attention than conflict-displaced persons, they experienced comparable levels of vulnerability and faced significant obstacles in accessing food, safe water and other essential services.[1252] In the southern governorates, displaced persons, returnees and rural communities continued to face disproportionately limited access to water and sanitation services.[1253]

2.3.2. Situation of returnees

As of 31 December 2025, the returnee population in Iraq stood at 4 954 518.[1254] Since 2021, the Iraqi government has intensified repatriation efforts, particularly for individuals from Al-Hol and Rawj camps in northeast Syria.[1255] Returns from these camps continued during 2025 and reportedly increased following developments in Syria, notably the takeover of Damascus by a

[1245] Rudaw, Climate change displaces over 17,000 Iraqi families in five years, 3 December 2025, url
[1246] UN in Iraq, Advocacy Note | Water Scarcity and Climate Risks in Iraq, 20 January 2026, url
[1247] The two figures are not directly comparable: the Ministry's figure covers families displaced since 2021 and reported across seven governorates, whereas IOM's figure covers a broader geographical area and includes families whose climate-related displacement began before 2021. The IOM figure therefore represents the stock of families remaining displaced at the time of the assessment rather than the number newly displaced during 2025.
[1248] IOM, Iraq — Climate-Induced Displacement — Central and Southern Iraq (September 2025), url, p. 1
[1249] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 209
[1250] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 10
[1251] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 209
[1252] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 10
[1253] UN in Iraq, Advocacy Note | Water Scarcity and Climate Risks in Iraq, 20 January 2026, url
[1254] IOM/DTM, Iraq — Update on Cross-border Mobility and Internal Displacement in Iraq (01 June 2026), 4 June 2026, url
[1255] UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024) Report of the Secretary-General, 30 May 2025, url, paras. 40-41

coalition of armed groups led by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in December 2024.[1256] These repatriations form a distinct component of the broader return and reintegration situation in Iraq, which also encompasses the much larger population of IDPs who have returned to their areas of origin[1257] (see Situation of the IDPs). By the end of 2025, the Iraqi authorities had facilitated the return of hundreds of Iraqi nationals from Al-Hol camp as part of the government's ongoing repatriation and reintegration efforts.[1258] Returnees from northeast Syria, predominantly women and children, were repatriated from Al-Hol and Rawj camps through the One UN Plan and the 'New Beginnings' initiative, following screening and rehabilitation processes at the al-Amal Rehabilitation Centre. Informal or 'shadow' returns outside these mechanisms remained associated with heightened protection risks, particularly regarding documentation, monitoring and access to assistance[1259] (see section 1.4.3 Return of persons with perceived affiliation to ISIL).

Returnees in Iraq continued to face significant barriers to sustainable reintegration. Nearly 605 000 returnees (12 %) were living in areas assessed as having high-severity conditions, while a further 1.91 million (40 %) resided in areas with medium-severity conditions.[1260] In some areas, insecurity, limited access to services, livelihood constraints, damaged infrastructure and unresolved housing, land and property (HLP) issues continued to hinder sustainable returns.[1261] Economic hardship remained a significant challenge for returnees, many of whom lacked stable income, adequate housing and sustainable livelihoods. In August 2025, a joint UN-Iraq initiative found that only 27 % of registered returnee households had received their financial entitlements since 2019, citing data-related challenges and procedural delays.[1262] Among returnee populations, women and girls,[1263] persons with disabilities and marginalised groups[1264] continued to face stigma, harassment[1265] and barriers to accessing services, [1266]

[1256] UNSG, Implementation of resolution 2732 (2024) Report of the Secretary-General, 30 May 2025, url, paras. 40-41; Arab Center Washington DC, Pragmatism Shapes Iraq's Position Toward Post-Assad Syria, 1 July 2025, url
[1257] UNIDIR, Shadow crossings: Informal Returnees from Al Hol, May 2024, url, p. 7
[1258] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url
[1259] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 5; UNIDIR, Social Acceptance of Iraqi Returnees from Al-Hol Camp, 23 July 2026, url, p. 2
[1260] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 5; IOM, Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2025, February 2026, url, pp. 5-6
[1261] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 4; UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, As of December 2025, 6 January 2026, url, pp. 1, 5
[1262] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 208
[1263] UNIDIR, From Al Hol to hope: Navigating return and reintegration challenges, 15 August 2024, url, pp. 8-9, 21; IOM, Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2025, February 2025, url, pp. 5-6; UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 5
[1264] IOM, Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2025, February 2026, url, p. 5; UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 5
[1265] UNIDIR, From Al Hol to hope: Navigating return and reintegration challenges, 15 August 2024, url, pp. 8-9, 21; IOM, Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2025, February 2025, url, pp. 5-6; UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 5
[1266] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 5; UNSC, Letter dated 23 December 2025 from the representatives of Denmark, Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, S/2025/84, 23 December 2025, url, p. 6

increasing their exposure to negative coping mechanisms,[1267] such as exploitation,[1268] child marriage, sexual harassment,[1269] domestic and gender-based violence and trafficking risks.[1270] Children in returnee families also face heightened risks, including recruitment by non-state armed groups and engagement in child labour.[1271]

Lack of civil documentation remained a major barrier to reintegration, restricting access to essential services,[1272] freedom of movement and employment opportunities.[1273] Although Iraqi authorities, with support from UN agencies and NGOs, issued documentation to more than 1.2 million displaced and returned individuals between 2019 and 2025,[1274] significant gaps remained, particularly among children born in areas formerly controlled by ISIL,[1275] for individuals in EMCs, and female-headed households.[1276] Many such children lacked valid birth certificates required to access education and healthcare.[1277] Moreover, some returnees risk renewed displacement, particularly when they lacked legal identity documentation.[1278]

Returns remained particularly challenging in areas affected by lack of safety and security in areas of origin.[1279] Although a peace agreement between Türkiye and the PKK led to the latter beginning to lay down its arms in July 2025, the continued presence of Turkish forces prevented thousands of residents of villages in the KRI from returning to their homes.[1280] In Sinjar, the return of Yazidis remained limited due to widespread destruction of housing and

[1267] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 8; UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 5
[1268] UNIDIR, From Al Hol to hope: Navigating return and reintegration challenges, 15 August 2024, url, pp. 8-9
[1269] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 208
[1270] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 8; AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 208
[1271] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 8
[1272] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, pp. 4-5
[1273] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url; UNIDIR, Struggling to Keep Up: Iraqi Returnees' Economic (Re)integration Progress Over Time, August 2025, url, p. 19
[1274] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 5
[1275] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 5
[1276] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 9 August 2026, url, p. 4
[1277] UNNM, IOM, Iraq Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2026, url, p. 5; UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 26 April 2026, url, p. 2; UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, As of December 2025, 6 January 2026, url, p. 1; UNIDIR, Struggling to Keep Up: Iraqi Returnees' Economic (Re)integration Progress Over Time, August 2025, url, p. 11
[1278] IOM, Iraq Crisis Response Plan 2025, February 2025, url, pp. 5-6
[1279] UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, 26 April 2026, url, p. 2; UNHCR/IOM, Update on Internal Displacement in Iraq, As of December 2025, 6 January 2026, url, p. 1; UNIDIR, Struggling to Keep Up: Iraqi Returnees' Economic (Re)integration Progress Over Time, August 2025, url, p. 11
[1280] AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Iraq 2026, 21 April 2026, url, p. 208

infrastructure,[1281] unresolved security,[1282] political and legal obstacles[1283] and the stalled implementation of the Sinjar Agreement.[1284] The continued presence of multiple armed groups in Sinjar,[1285] including the PKK and the PMF, the KDP, Iraqi security forces, and local Yazidi actors competing for the control of the area, also continued to impede the return.[1286] Consequently, more than 110 000 Yazidis from Sinjar remained displaced in camps, primarily in Duhok governorate and the Zakho Independent Administration, while a further 170 000 displaced residents of Sinjar were living outside camps, mostly in Duhok governorate.[1287] Many returnees to Sinjar have subsequently returned to Duhok in recent years after finding their homes uninhabitable.[1288]

[1281] Geneva Call, Rebuilding trust in Sinjar, Iraq: long-term engagement and inclusive dialogue as tools for civilian protection, 18 November 2025, url
[1282] UN, UN mission's exit marks milestone in Iraq's post-conflict transition, 12 December 2025, url; Geneva Call, Rebuilding trust in Sinjar, Iraq: long-term engagement and inclusive dialogue as tools for civilian protection, 18 November 2025, url
[1283] Politico, Iraq's displaced Yazidis and security forces cast ballots in early voting in parliamentary election, 11 September 2025, url
[1284] Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, A House Divided: How Internal Power Struggles Shape Iraq's Foreign Policy, 5 January 2026, url; Shafaq News, KRG blames unlawful groups for Sinjar accord failure, 9 October 2025, url
[1285] Amargi, The endless displacement of Yazidi genocide survivors, 1 October 2025, url
[1286] Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, A House Divided: How Internal Power Struggles Shape Iraq's Foreign Policy, 5 January 2026, url
[1287] Shafaq News, Over 110,000 Sinjar residents still displaced after nearly 12 years, 1 February 2026, url
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Annex 1: Bibliography

Oral sources, including anonymous sources

Haley Bobseine, email correspondence 28-29 October 2024 and email correspondence to EUAA, 13 July 2025. Bobseine is a senior Iraq researcher and analyst specialising on tribal affairs with experience across UN agencies, think tanks, NGOs, development firms, and private companies. Her areas of expertise include geopolitics, conflict and political risk analysis, the effects of climate change, energy, and related policy issues.

Winthrop Rodgers, email correspondence, 28-29 October 2024 and email correspondence, 4 July 2025. Rodgers is a journalist and researcher expert on Iraq. He is an associate fellow with the Middle East and North Africa Programme at Chatham House. His work focuses on politics, human rights, political economy, press freedom, diplomacy, labour and the environment in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. His past work has appeared in international publications like Foreign Policy, the Index on Censorship, New Lines Magazine, Al-Monitor and The Dial and local independent outlets in the Kurdistan Region. Rodgers holds a MA from Queen's University Belfast and BA from Bates College.

Anonymous source, online interview with EUAA, 26 June 2026. The source is an Iraqi scholar with extensive research experience with several institutions and international organisations.

Anonymous source, online interview with EUAA, 30 June 2026. The source is a researcher and international development professional with expertise in gender, women's rights, and political and legal issues in Iraq.

Harith Al-Dabbagh, email correspondence with EUAA, 22 July 2026. Al-Dabbagh is a law professor at the Université de Montréal specialising in comparative private law, private international law, Islamic law, and the interaction between religious and secular norms. He received his initial legal education in Iraq at the University of Mosul before completing postgraduate studies in France and Canada. He previously taught at the University of Mosul Faculty of Law and has published extensively in French and Arabic on Iraqi law, legal pluralism, and law and religion.

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Annex 2: Terms of Reference

The research focuses on the period between **1 August 2025– 31 July 2026**.

- **Human rights and treatment of specific profiles**

  - General human rights situation
  - Latest legislation impacting civil and human rights and its implementation
  - Ethnic and religious minorities
    - Treatment of ethno-religious groups
  - Individuals perceived as opposing the state and state-affiliated actors
    - Members of political opposition parties, political and human rights activists, protesters
    - Journalists and media workers
    - Individuals with (perceived) affiliation to ISIL
  - Palestinians in Iraq
  - Women and girls
    - Legal and social status (including implementation of recent legislation impacting women's rights)
    - Situation of unmarried, widowed, divorced women and women without support network
    - Violence against women and girls (Domestic violence, Sexual violence, Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), Child and forced marriage, Conflict-related (sexual) violence, Honour-related violence)
  - Children
    - Child recruitment by armed groups
    - Children with perceived affiliation to ISIL
    - Children without civil documentation
    - Child labour
    - Child marriage
    - Children in street situation
    - Access to education
  - LGBTIQ
  - Individuals perceived as transgressing moral and Islamic norms
  - Persons involved in and affected by blood/land feuds in the context of tribal conflict

- **Humanitarian and Socio-economic situation**

  - Overview of the humanitarian and socio-economic situation
  - Update on Entry, residency requirements and access to civil documentation and services
  - Situation of the IDPs, including climate change-induced displacement and situation of returnees



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