



Iraq – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 16 October 2014

Information on state protection and the possibility of internal relocation in Iraq.

A country report on Iraq published by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of Australia, in a section titled “Internal Relocation” (paragraph 5.11), states:

“DFAT assesses as credible UN views that internal relocation for minorities to or within central and southern Iraq may not be a reasonable option in most cases. Even where an individual may be able to escape the reach of the aggressor, reports of insecurity, lack of housing, services and job opportunities and lack of documentation hamper opportunities. Relocation to an area with a predominantly different ethnic or religious demographic can contribute to latent or overt tensions between groups, particularly for Sunni relocating to Shia dominant areas or vice versa.” (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Australia (29 November 2013) *DFAT Country Report: Iraq*, p.25)

The most recent UN High Commissioner for Refugees eligibility guidelines document for Iraq, in a section titled “Internal Flight or Relocation Alternative”, states:

“In the context of Iraq, UNHCR’s analysis distinguishes between the situation in the central governorates, the southern governorates, and the three northern governorates (Kurdistan Region). The availability of an IFA/IRA in the latter area would also depend on whether the individual concerned is from the central or southern Governorates, or from within the three northern governorates themselves.” (UN High Commissioner for Refugees (31 May 2012) *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Iraq*, p.48)

In a sub-section headed “Summary for IFA/IRA in Southern and Central Iraq” this document states:

“Reports of insecurity, problematic living conditions and lack of documentation in southern and central Iraq militate against the availability of an IFA/IRA. Further, relocation to an area with a predominantly different ethnic or religious demographic is not reasonable due to latent or overt tensions between ethnic or religious groups. This can be particularly the case when considering relocation of Sunnis to predominantly Shi’ite areas or vice versa.” (ibid, p.56)

In a sub-section headed “Agents of Persecution” this document states:

“As indicated in these Guidelines, persecution primarily emanates from a range of non-state actors. Armed groups reportedly have operatives in many

parts of the country and, as a result, a viable IFA/IRA will likely not exist for individuals at risk of being targeted by such groups in southern and central Iraq. As reported throughout these Guidelines, armed groups are present in many parts of the country and have demonstrated mobility in accessing areas where they do not have strongholds. The mobility and reach of armed groups should not be underestimated in determining the relevance of an IFA/IRA. Persons seeking to relocate to other areas in central and southern Iraq may be at risk of facing renewed violence given the high levels of violence prevailing in many areas.” (ibid, p.53)

This sub-section also states:

“Travel by road within the central and southern governorates remains dangerous, especially at night. Roadside bombings and shootings, robberies, kidnappings and carjackings seem to remain daily occurrences, in addition to attacks on civilian, government and military vehicles on roads and highways in both urban and rural areas throughout the country.¹³²⁹ Travelling prior to or during religious festivities also involves a heightened risk as armed groups are said to aim at launching mass casualty attacks on Shi’ite pilgrims on the road. Military operations among armed groups and the ISF/Sahwa continue mainly in the central governorates. Travelling is reportedly often impaired and delayed by ISF/Sahwa checkpoints and convoys, where there is also an increased risk of being harmed given the frequent targeting of the ISF/Sahwa. False checkpoints have also reportedly been erected to stage attacks. Freedom of movement is also impacted by checks at governorate borders, sometimes reportedly resulting in arrests.” (ibid, p.53)

Referring to the availability of state protection this document states:

“Generally, protection by national authorities will not be available given that the national authorities have as yet limited capacity to enforce law and order. Members of the ISF and the judiciary are themselves a major target of attacks and are reportedly prone to corruption and infiltration.” (ibid, p.53)

The DFAT report referred to above, in a section titled “State Protection” (paragraph 5.1), states:

“DFAT assesses Iraqi state institutions have little willingness and limited capacity to protect certain sections of the community from abuse, or to transparently punish perpetrators of crime. Some abuse is likely to have been perpetuated by state actors.” (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Australia (29 November 2013) *DFAT Country Report: Iraq*, p.24)

The Introduction to an Amnesty International report states:

“Amnesty International has documented dozens of cases of abductions and unlawful killings by Shi’a militias in Baghdad, Samarra and Kirkuk, with many more such cases reported all over the country. Such crimes are being perpetrated against a background of increased sectarian tensions in the country. Since Iraqi central government forces lost control of much of northern Iraq to the Sunni Islamist armed group which calls itself “the Islamic State” (IS) last June, sectarian attacks have spiraled to a level not seen since 2006-2007, the worst period of civil strife in the country’s recent history. Government-backed Shi’a militias and Sunni armed opposition groups have

both been targeting civilians from each other's communities." (Amnesty International (14 October 2014) *Absolute impunity: Militia rule in Iraq*, p.4)

A Human Rights Watch report states:

"Iraq the state is almost broken. Kurdish ministers have suspended participation in the cabinet, parliament postpones forming a new government, security forces are infiltrated both by Shia militias and Sunni armed groups. Iraqis are losing hope that their country will ever be repaired: Nearly everyone I speak to tells me a break-up of the state is 'inevitable.'" (Human Rights Watch (20 July 2014) *Time is Running Out for Iraq as Nation Spirals into Chaos*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

References:

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