



# Briefing Notes Summary

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Iraq – January to June 2025

30 June 2025

## 13 January 2025

### **Consequences of ISIS rule**

According to an Iraqi news organisation, at least one woman was killed and three other members of her family were injured in the province of al-Anbar on 29.12.24 when a landmine left behind by ISIS exploded.

On 10.01.25, three children were reportedly killed when an unexploded hand grenade detonated in the province of Saladin.

On 09.01.25, the Iraqi government announced that 193 families, consisting of approximately 715 people, had returned to Iraq from the al-Hol refugee camp in northeast Syria. Most of the people in al-Hol are displaced persons who have links to ISIS.<sup>1</sup>

## 20 January 2025

### **Human rights situation; HRW annual report**

In its annual report on the development of the human rights situation in 2024, published on 16.01.25, HRW stated, among other things, that the Iraqi government had restricted the rights of its citizens by passing new laws.

In this context, HRW mentioned in particular a law banning homosexuality in the form of an amendment to the Law Banning Prostitution, which was passed by the Iraqi parliament on 27.04.24. It also reported an increase in "unlawful executions" that were not preceded by fair trials.<sup>2</sup>

## 27 January 2025

### **Controversial legislative package passed; child marriage legalised**

On 21.01.25, the Iraqi parliament passed three controversial laws in a single round of voting. The three very different projects had each been supported by a different political bloc, none of which up to that point had found a majority on their own.

One of the laws adopted supplements Articles 2 and 10 of the 1959 Personal Status Law No. 188, according to which Islamic religious courts are once again granted influence in matters of family law (as they had previously been until the law was introduced in the middle of the last century) and are given a certain amount of room for interpretation regarding the application of Islamic law. For example, the minimum age for marriage in Iraq used to be 18, but according to the Jaafari school of faith, which is followed by many Shia scholars in Iraq, in theory girls

can now be married from the age of just nine and boys from 14. According to the teachings of Sunni schools, the minimum age is 15.

The conservative Shia members of parliament who campaigned in favour of the law argued that it would bring family law into line with Islamic principles and reduce western influence on Iraqi culture. According to a UN study conducted in 2023, twenty-eight percent of all Iraqi women and girls were married off before they reached the age of 18. Before the law can come into force in the autonomous Kurdistan Region, it must first be ratified by the regional parliament there.

In another law, a general amnesty was passed which observers say will benefit Sunni prisoners and particularly those involved in corruption and embezzlement.

A third law concerns territorial claims by the autonomous Kurdistan Region and is intended to enable those affected to obtain land restitution after being dispossessed of their properties under Saddam Hussein's rule.<sup>3</sup>

## **10 February 2025**

### **Federal Supreme Court of Iraq suspends implementation of controversial bills**

On 04.02.25, Iraq's highest judicial authority ordered the suspension of three recently passed laws (cf. BN of 27.02.25) until the federal judges have ruled on a complaint submitted by several members of parliament against the underlying voting process.

According to the plaintiffs, the bills should have been voted on individually but all three bills were voted on last month together in order to achieve the necessary majority in all three cases.<sup>4</sup>

## **17 February 2025**

### **Personal Status Law**

On 11.02.25, the Supreme Court of Iraq rejected the formal challenges filed against the parliamentary procedure of the vote on the controversial Personal Status Law (cf. BN of 10.02.25). It therefore entered into force on 14.02.25.<sup>5</sup>

### **Repatriations from al-Hol**

After the imminent repatriation of 155 families comprising a total of 569 people from the al-Hol camp in Syria was made known on 08.02.25, it was announced on 16.02.25 that the responsible ministry is currently considering putting a halt to the repatriations for the time being. The background to this is that the deradicalization measures and the transitional camp in Iraq, which initially takes in ISIS families from the Syrian camp and prepares their reintegration into society, were financed by USAID, and Iraq itself does not currently have the funds to finance this. All of the more than 20,000 Iraqis who have been held at the al-Hol and al-Roji camps in Syria since the fall of ISIS were to have been taken back by the Iraqi government by 2027. The individuals and families associated with ISIS who are being held at the camps are considered to be a high risk to regional stability.<sup>6</sup>

## **24 February 2025**

### **Census**

On 24.02.25, the politically controversial results of the first nationwide census to be conducted since 1987 were published. However, data such as the ethnic distribution in various disputed areas was not made public initially. According to the census, Iraq has a population of around 46 million, of which 50.22 percent are male and 49.78 percent are female. Over 70 percent of the population live in cities, and in Kurdistan the proportion of urbanisation

is even higher at almost 85 percent. Only 3.66 percent of the population is 65 and older, while children under five years old account for 11.16 percent of the population.<sup>7</sup>

### **03 March 2025**

#### **Impact of the possible self-dissolution of the PKK**

In Iraq, the announcement of a ceasefire and the possible self-dissolution of the PKK (cf. the section on Türkiye) has been largely welcomed across party lines. Various parties have expressed hope, particularly with regard to the role the PKK plays in the Shingal region. A complex agreement between the armed groups active on the ground has been in the pipeline for years, which would ultimately result in the Iraqi state taking over the security of the region. Groups affiliated with the PKK have repeatedly opposed its implementation because it would have forced them to give up positions of strategic importance for the PKK.<sup>8</sup>

### **10 March 2025**

#### **Turkish airstrike in Sulaimani**

On 06.03.25, an airstrike was carried out on a village in the Sulaimani governorate. There are no reports of deaths or injuries. A local NGO attributes the attack to the Turkish military. Such attacks on suspected Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) targets in the region have occurred repeatedly in the past.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Energy imports from Iran**

On 08.03.25, the US government announced it was rescinding the waiver of Iraq's exemptions for energy imports from Iran with immediate effect.

A significant proportion of Iraq's electricity supply, particularly in southern Iraq, is provided by imports from the Iranian grid. Iraq has no short-term alternatives to compensate for the energy shortfall elsewhere, which is of particular concern during the summer months when Iraq usually has the highest energy consumption. Temperatures in Baghdad have reached more than 50 degrees Celsius during the summer months in the past.<sup>10</sup>

### **17 March 2025**

#### **IDP camps in the Kurdistan Region**

On 15.03.25, the Ministry of Migration and Internally Displaced Persons announced that a number of measures to improve the organisation of supplies for internally displaced persons in the Kurdistan Region could not be implemented for the time being due to a lack of funds.

The main plan was to merge some of the remaining camps where a small number of IDPs remain, in favour of larger facilities with correspondingly simplified supplies. In general, the funds that the Ministry has available for supplies for internally displaced persons have become increasingly scarce, partly due to the decline in international donations. According to a statement issued by the Ministry on 12.03.25, twenty-three thousand families remain in camps in the Kurdistan Region, but voluntary returns have slowed down significantly. The Ministry sees two main reasons for this: firstly, it is assumed that there will be a renewed seasonal increase in the number of returnees during the Iraqi summer holidays. Secondly, a lack of funds will lead to a pause in the return grant of around USD 3,000 per family.<sup>11</sup>

### **31 March 2025**

#### **Approaching drought**

On 25.03.25, the Kurdistan Region's water administration announced that water levels were declining sharply, which suggests that there will be another drought again in the summer.

The Kurdistan Region is currently receiving far less water from Iran than in previous years, although this is not due

to Iran deliberately holding back water, as the dams in Iran are currently below capacity, which is normal for this time of year. In the district of al-Dawaya in Dhi Qar province, local authorities are now saying that residents are being internally displaced due to water shortages, which are currently so severe that families are being forced to move because there is simply no more drinking water available.<sup>12</sup>

## **07 April 2025**

### **Dohuk: attack on Assyrian and Chaldean New Year festival**

An armed attack was carried out on 01.04.25 at a public celebration in Dohuk on the occasion of a New Year festival (Akitu) being held by Assyrian and Chaldean Christians in Iraq.

According to media reports, the attacker injured three people with an axe, and was then apprehended. He is said to be a Syrian national with links to IS. The attack was unanimously condemned in Iraqi political and social circles.<sup>13</sup>

### **Amnesty law: more than 1,000 people released**

According to the Iraqi justice ministry, a total of more than 1,000 inmates were released on 06.04.25 on the basis of the provisions contained in the newly-adopted amnesty law.

The new law primarily aims to release people associated with terrorist groups from Iraqi prisons who have however not themselves been accused of having committed murder. Particularly Sunni Arab MPs had urged this since a large share of people jailed on such charges come from this group. The Ministry announced that the move was to be implemented gradually, given the need to examine on a case-by-case basis whether other charges were pending over and above those covered by anti-terrorism legislation.<sup>14</sup>

## **14 April 2025**

### **Number of executions quadrupled in 2024**

According to a new report by Amnesty International (AI) of 08.04.25, Iraq was among the five countries where the death penalty was carried out most frequently in 2024.

AI was able to document 63 executions in Iraq for 2024, representing four times the number in the previous year 2023.<sup>15</sup>

### **The fight against the IS**

The Iraqi security forces continue to operate against the IS, thus continuing to pursue and maintain and investigative pressure on it.

On 12.04.25, a spokesperson of the Kurdish Ministry for the Peshmerga announced that an operation in Diyala province had been completed, as part of which several hideouts and camps of the IS in the province had been destroyed. On 13.04.25, the Iraqi air force flew several attacks on hideouts of the IS in Salah-ad-Din province.<sup>16</sup>

## **28 April 2025**

### **Yazidi return to Sinjar**

On 21.04.25, a spokesperson for the migration ministry stated that another 92 Yazidi families had returned to Sinjar (Ninawar province) from camps in Duhok province, but without specifying a period during which this return took place.

This meant that the number of Yazidi families living in refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region fell from January 2024 onwards from 34,000 to 21,000.<sup>17</sup>

### **Several young Yazidi men freed**

It was announced according to reports of 15.04.25 and 27.04.25 that a total of three Yazidi men who had been

abducted by ISIS in 2014 aged eight and eleven, respectively, had been freed in Syria by units of the SDF and reunited with their families in Iraq.

One of the men stated that he had been deployed by ISIS as a child soldier for four years, after receiving several years of religious indoctrination. Of the total of 6,417 Yazidis who were abducted in 2014, only 3,585 have so far been rescued alive, and the bodies of another 274 kidnapping victims, predominantly men, have been identified.<sup>18</sup>

## **05 May 2025**

### **Situation in Iraqi prisons**

On 03.05.25, Iraqi justice minister Khaled Shwani informed the press of the current situation in Iraqi prisons. Iraq's prisons are said to currently be at more than 200 % of their nominal capacity. This is said to be exerting a toll in terms of human rights, hygienic and health standards. The situation was serious, but had improved in comparison to the previous year, when prisons had still been at more than 300 % of their capacity. The newly-adopted amnesty law was said to have now led to roughly 2,000 prisoners being released, so that a total of roughly 65,000 remained behind bars. Four new prisons were currently being built. The government hoped that it would be able to largely resolve the problem of overcrowding over the next year.<sup>19</sup>

## **26 May 2025**

### **Yazidi families return to Sinjar**

According to a spokesperson for the Iraqi ministry of migration and displacement, a total of 127 Yazidi families with more than 600 members returned to Sinjar district (Nineva governorate) on 18.05.25 from camps in Dohuk province. According to the ministry, the families were provided with the equivalent of 3,000 USD in financial assistance each, along with essential household appliances. The ministry is said to be anticipating a rise in the number of families returning once the summer holidays begin. The director of the department of migration, displacement and crisis response in Duhok confirmed on 20.05.25 that 370 families had returned to their region of origin in Nineva. They had reportedly left the places where they had previously been staying in Dohuk over the previous two days as the final group under an IOM-supported voluntary return programme, and returned to their towns and villages across Sinjar district. Nearly 200,000 Yazidis continue to live in or near displacement camps in Duhok province.<sup>20</sup>

## **02 June 2025**

### **Water shortages and persistent drought**

The Iraqi ministry of water resources stated in the sidelines of the fifth Baghdad International Water Conference at the end of May 2025 that Iraq was faced by the most serious water crisis for 80 years. The country was reported to not have even half the water volume of at least 18 billion cubic meters that it needed before the start of the agricultural summer season.

Along with a drought which had lasted five years, high temperatures and inadequate melted snow, the government also blames the regional water policy of neighbouring countries Türkiye and Iran for the current situation. Since roughly 98 % of Iraq's surface water comes from these countries, Iraq is heavily dependent on Turkish and Iranian water policy. Dams which have been built in both of these countries have caused the flow of water to the Euphrates, Tigris and Karun rivers to drop considerably. In order to be able to ensure the supply of potable water for the population, the government stated that it was forced to impose drastic limits on water use for agricultural purposes. According to the agriculture ministry, it is therefore now only possible for roughly 1.5 million dunam (approx. 375,000 hectares) of land to be cultivated, as opposed to last year's figure of 2.5 million dunam. The consequences

of the ongoing water shortages meant that many farmers had already had to give up their livelihoods, according to reports.<sup>21</sup>

**16 June 2025**

### **Iraqi police seize municipality building in Sinjar province**

According to information from several Kurdish news agencies, Iraqi police forces seized on 11.06.25 the people's municipality building in the Girzerik district of Sinjar without showing any official documents.

Operations were not resumed in the administration until 10.03.25 in order to provide essential services to persons and families who returned after being expelled by IS.<sup>22</sup>

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration  
Briefing Notes  
[BN-Redaktion@bamf.bund.de](mailto:BN-Redaktion@bamf.bund.de)

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