

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	837
Land:	Irak
Kilde:	Minority Rights Group International
Titel:	State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2015 - Iraq
Udgivet:	2. juli 2015
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	1. september 2015

State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2015 - Iraq

Publisher [Minority Rights Group International](#)

Publication Date 2 July 2015

Cite as Minority Rights Group International, *State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2015 - Iraq*, 2 July 2015, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55a4fa5313.html> [accessed 24 August 2015]

Disclaimer This is not a UNHCR publication. UNHCR is not responsible for, nor does it necessarily endorse, its content. Any views expressed are solely those of the author or publisher and do not necessarily reflect those of UNHCR, the United Nations or its Member States.

The spread of armed conflict during 2014, propelled by the rise of ISIS, has taken an enormous toll on the civilian population. Over the course of the year, over 17,000 civilians were killed and more than 2 million displaced, with minorities disproportionately affected. After ISIS took control of the Ninewa plains, traditionally home to many of Iraq's diverse ethnic and religious minority groups, militants carried out a brutal campaign of executions, abductions and expulsions. Entire minority communities, including Armenian Christians, Chaldo-Assyrians, Sabeen Mandaean, Shabak, Turkmen and Yezidis, have been uprooted from areas where they have been living in some cases for thousands of years. Minority women have been the targets of particularly horrific forms of sexual and gender-based violence, including kidnapping, rape, forced marriage, sexual slavery and trafficking.

The spread of the conflict over the course of the year assumed increasingly urban dimensions as ISIS took control of major cities previously thought to be firmly under the control of the Iraqi government. In January, ISIS seized Fallujah and Ramadi in Al-Anbar governorate before moving into Mosul in Ninewa governorate in June as the Iraqi Security Forces collapsed. As the country's second largest city, Mosul was previously home to a wide array of minority groups. Hundreds of Christian families and other minorities joined the exodus of civilians leaving Mosul, with the UN estimating that 500,000 people fled in the first week following the entry of ISIS into the city. The remaining Christian families received an ultimatum to either convert to Islam, pay *jizya* (a tribute levied on non-Muslims) or be killed. In June ISIS also took control of Tikrit and then Tal Afar, causing the displacement of approximately 200,000 Turkmen. Further massacres of civilians in Shi'a Turkmen and Shabak villages took place as ISIS's advance continued, with hundreds also taken captive and towns such as the Turkmen-majority town of Amerli besieged. ISIS also took control of many Assyrian areas in the Ninewa plains in early August, forcing thousands more to flee for their lives, leaving behind everything they owned.

Among the worst affected by this advance are Iraq's Yezidis. In the beginning of August ISIS reached Sinjar, home to a large portion of the community. The Kurdish *peshmerga* forces, who had been protecting the area, withdrew without warning, leaving the local population defenceless. An estimated 200,000 Yezidi civilians fled for their lives, with at least 50,000 heading to Sinjar mountain, where they were trapped in the scorching summer heat for days without food or water. Those unable to escape or who attempted to defend their villages from ISIS fighters were subsequently murdered or abducted, with large-scale massacres of Yezidi men and boys in the villages of Qiniyeh, Kocho and Idali. Meanwhile, thousands of Yezidi women and girls were abducted for the purpose of forced marriage or sexual slavery. Large numbers of women were subsequently transported to Syria to be sold or forcibly married to ISIS fighters. As of the end of 2014, only about 300 had managed to escape.

ISIS has imposed a new order in urban areas under its control, marked by the imposition of strict interpretations of religious law, the silencing of all forms of opposition and the destruction of any traces of minority culture and heritage. In Mosul, ISIS issued orders mandating women to wear the veil and instructing them not to leave the house unless accompanied by a man. Residents of the city have been tried in self-styled Sharia courts for violating or opposing the group's ideology, with many sentenced to public executions and other punishments. ISIS also expropriated houses belonging to Christians and other minorities before looting them of their contents.

In addition, militants have destroyed or defaced sites of enormous religious, cultural and historical value, including several churches and monuments in Mosul, the Assyrian Green Church in Tikrit, the oldest and largest library in Tel Afar and countless mosques, shrines and tombs of religious importance to Shabak, Turkmen and Yezidis. Evidence of the region's historic diversity, reflected in the wealth of churches, mosques and other buildings in its urban areas, has been systematically eradicated in a process described by Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, as a campaign of 'cultural cleansing'.

Most Iraqis displaced by the recent wave of violence are currently living in desperate conditions. The majority have fled to urban centres in the Iraqi Kurdistan region, where around 930,000 IDPs, or 47 per cent of Iraq's total IDP population, were based by late 2014. While a few have been able to find accommodation with friends and relatives or are using their savings to rent apartments, the majority are living in overcrowded camps, unfinished building structures, churches, malls, schools and other public buildings. The influx of IDPs raises difficult dilemmas related to informal and illegal housing occupancy in Kurdish cities. It also risks creating future conflicts over lands and properties that IDPs were forced to leave behind, in some cases exacerbating unresolved land claims dating back to the Ba'athist era.

Adapting to life in displacement in cities or camps in the Kurdish region has been particularly difficult for minorities. In addition to lacking all the basic necessities of life, including food, drinking water, clothing, medicines and hygienic products, many are suffering from the effects of severe trauma and have little access to support services such as psychosocial counselling to help them to deal with experiences such as sexual violence. The prospect of accessing employment and public services is bleak for many IDPs, due to high competition, language barriers and discrimination by Kurdish authorities against minorities. IDP women are also especially vulnerable to sexual harassment, assault and other forms of exploitation.

Although the latest crisis has greatly compounded the suffering of Iraq's minorities, the struggle for recognition and access to basic rights in the urban context is not new. In the context of spiralling sectarian violence in the years following the US-led invasion, Iraq's urban centres have long been unsafe for minorities. Formerly mixed neighbourhoods in major cities such as Baghdad have become segregated along sectarian lines, leaving minorities especially vulnerable to targeted violence. Faced with the government's unwillingness to protect minorities or prosecute those responsible for attacks against them, many minorities have left and resettled elsewhere, especially in the Ninewa plains. However, living in minority areas has meant facing the reality of neglect in public service provision from the Iraqi government. In the past, the government has allocated the Ninewa governorate less than its legally required share of the federal budget, and many towns lack basic public services. In the southern and central regions of Iraq, areas inhabited by black and Roma minorities are marked by deplorable living conditions, including lack of suitable housing and inadequate access to drinking water or sanitation.

The long-term process of marginalization of Iraq's minorities, compounded by recent events, has opened up the possibility that the existence of these historical communities in Iraq could be coming to an end. The latest crisis has led many to abandon hope of a safe return to their homes and focus instead on restarting their lives elsewhere. However, given the deep roots of minorities in Iraq and their centrality to the country's history and culture, many minority leaders emphasize the importance of establishing safe areas allowing minorities to return to their lands, with reconciliation measures to enable reintegration with other faiths and ethnic backgrounds.

Search Refworld

by keyword

and / or country

Clear

Search

[Advanced Search](#) | [Search Tips](#)

Countries

- [Iraq](#)

Topics

- [Armed groups / Militias / Paramilitary forces / Resistance movements](#)
- [Internally displaced persons \(IDPs\)](#)
- [Minorities](#)
- [Minority rights](#)
- [Yazīdī](#)