

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

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Iraq

NOT FREE

30
/100

<u>Political Rights</u>	16 /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	14 /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

29 /100 **Not Free**

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. See the methodology.



Overview

Iraq holds regular, competitive elections, and the country's various partisan, religious, and ethnic groups generally enjoy representation in the political system. However, democratic governance is impeded in practice by corruption, militias operating outside the bounds of the law, and the weakness of formal institutions. In the Kurdistan region, democratic institutions lack the strength to contain the influence of the two ruling parties, each maintaining its own internal security forces, ready to repress dissidents and peaceful protesters. Increasingly, Tehran has been able to influence politics in Baghdad. State officials and powerful militias routinely infringe upon the rights of citizens through legal and extrajudicial means.

Key Developments in 2023

- In July, followers of Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr set fire to the Swedish Embassy in Baghdad to protest a planned Quran-burning event in Sweden organized by a man of Iraqi origin living there. Though Iraq's Foreign Ministry condemned the arson and promised to bring the perpetrators to justice, no arrests were made. The Embassy of Sweden relocated temporarily to Stockholm for the remainder of the year.
- In September, Iraqi security forces opened fire on a group of unarmed protesters in Kirkuk, killing four and injuring several others. The predominantly Kurdish protesters were angry with what they perceived as an ongoing erasure of Kurdish presence in the province amid ethnic tension with Arab and Turkmen residents. After the shooting, the Iraqi government encouraged restraint on all sides and initiated an investigation.
- In September, a massive fire at a wedding ceremony in the district of Qaraqosh in Nineveh province killed more than 120 guests. The fire was blamed on insufficient safety measures in the venue and the use of illegal structural material, suggesting that there had been corruption in obtaining building and construction licenses.
- In November, the Iraqi Supreme Court dismissed from the parliament prominent Sunni politician Muhammad al-Halbousi, who was the parliamentary speaker, and Representative Laith al-Dulaimi, who was also Sunni, amid a dispute between the two politicians.

Political Rights

A. Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?

2/4

After national elections, the Council of Representatives (CoR) chooses the largely ceremonial president, traditionally Kurdish, who in turn appoints a prime minister, traditionally Shia, nominated by the largest bloc in the parliament. The prime minister, who holds most executive power and forms the government, serves up to two four-year terms. In October 2022, after a year-long political paralysis, Prime Minister Muhammad Shia al-Sudani and his government, supported by the pro-Iran Coordination Framework, were approved by the parliament. Earlier that month, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)–aligned candidate, Abdul Latif Rashid, was elected as president.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), composed of Iraq's northernmost provinces, is ostensibly led by a president with extensive executive powers, but former long-term KRG president, Masoud Barzani, maintains significant political influence. In 2019, Nechirvan Barzani, Masoud's brother, was elected president by the Iraqi Kurdish parliament after the position had been vacant for nearly two years. Masrour Barzani, Masoud's son, was appointed and sworn in as prime minister the same month. Both Barzanis, the current president and prime minister, are members of the KDP.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?

3/4

The 329 members of the CoR are elected every four years from multimember open lists in each province. The October 2021 parliamentary elections were generally viewed as credible by international observers, despite documented cases of voter and candidate intimidation, bribing of voters, journalists being prevented

from covering the voting, arrests of activists calling for an election boycott, and the lowest voter turnout since the end of the Saddam Hussein regime.

In June 2022, following the resignation of 73 Sadrist parliamentarians at the order of Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, the CoR swore in 64 new parliamentarians, leaving nine seats vacant. The new parliamentarians were the runners-up in their districts in the 2021 elections and gave the pro-Iranian bloc, the Coordination Framework, 40 more seats, for a total of 130. The opposition parties affiliated with the 2019 protest movement, Imtidad and Ishraqat Kanoon, gained 7 and 1 seats respectively.

In August 2022, protests in Baghdad led by Sadrists in response to a 10-month political crisis turned into violent clashes with pro-Iran militias that resulted in the deaths of 22 people. Thereafter, al-Sadr called for his supporters to disperse, which paved the way for the formation of a government in October.

In Iraqi Kurdistan, the 111-seat Kurdish parliament is elected through closed party-list proportional representation in a single district, with members serving four-year terms. Since the 2018 elections, the governing KDP has maintained a plurality of seats, followed by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Gorran movement. The elections were plagued by fraud allegations and other irregularities, and Gorran and other smaller parties rejected the results. Political disputes between the KDP and PUK concerning the formation of the electoral committee led to the cancellation of the October 2022 Kurdish parliamentary elections, which at year's end were scheduled for June 2024.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?

3/4

The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) is responsible for managing elections. The IHEC generally enjoys the confidence of the international community and, according to some polls, the Iraqi public.

The October 2021 elections were the first held under a new system dividing Iraq into 83 multimember electoral districts, created to appease protesters from the 2019 Tishreen movement and facilitate the entry of independent candidates into the parliament.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?

3/4

The constitution guarantees the freedom to form and join political parties, with the exception of the pre-2003 dictatorship's Baath Party, whose participation, ideas, and protest activity are banned and criminalized. Groups that support racism, terrorism, sectarianism, sectarian cleansing, and other ideas contrary to democracy or the peaceful transfer of power are also banned. Individual Iraqis' freedom to run for office is also limited by a vague "good conduct" requirement in the electoral law.

In practice, Iraqis can generally form parties and operate without government interference, and parties explicitly opposing the current sectarian apportionment political system are allowed to operate, although prominent members face intimidation from militias. Women politicians have also faced threats from conservative elements in society. Party membership and multiparty alliances shift frequently.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?

2/4

Elections are competitive, but all major parties are dominated by one sectarian or ethnic group.

However, several new more secular and nationalist parties participated in the 2021 elections, and two parties linked to the 2019 Tishreen protest movement won 14 seats, even as its candidates and activists faced threats. Despite its military force

and loyal personnel, the Coordination Framework lost significant representation in 2021, demonstrating the ability of Iraqi voters to affect the parliament's makeup, even if they cannot shift the balance of armed power in the country. However, the resignation of Sadrist lawmakers in June 2022 again shifted the parliamentary balance of power back in favor of the Coordination Framework.

In 2022, KRG authorities continued their repression of the activities of the Kurdish opposition party New Generation and of its affiliated media outlet, Nalia Radio and Television (NRT), owned by New Generation party leader Shaswar Abdulwahid.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?

1/4

Iraq's political system remains distorted by interference from foreign powers, most notably Iran; Iranian authorities physically and politically threaten or buy the support of Iraqi policymakers. The governing Coordination Framework represents Iran-backed militias that do not follow the official command structure of Iraq's armed forces and engage in violent intimidation of political opponents, at times resorting to kidnapping and murder.

In December 2023, Fadhil al-Husseini, the founder of Al-Da'ee, a new Shia political bloc that has been critical of Iran, was assassinated in his car by unknown assailants.

In July 2022, following the resignation of 73 Sadrist lawmakers, Sadrist supporters prevented the functioning of the Iraqi parliament in Baghdad for several months by staging prolonged protests. After the protests turned into violent clashes with pro-Iran militias that resulted in the deaths of 22 people, the standoff ended, clearing the way for the October formation of the Coordination Framework-backed government.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political

1/4

Despite legal and constitutional measures designed to protect the political rights of various religious and ethnic groups, the dominant role of ethno-sectarian parties and the allocation of key offices according to informal religious or ethnic criteria reduce the likelihood that politicians will act in the interests of the whole population.

A system of reserved seats ensures a minimum representation in the CoR for some of Iraq's smaller religious and ethnic minorities. There are five seats reserved for Christians and one each for Fayli Kurds, Yazidis, Sabeen Mandaeans, and Shabaks. The Kurdish parliament reserves five seats for Turkmen, five for Christians, and one for Armenians. The political rights of minority groups have been severely impeded by widespread displacement from areas formerly occupied by the Islamic State (IS) militant group.

The CoR and the Kurdish parliament reserve 25 percent and 30 percent of their seats for women, respectively, though such formal representation has had little obvious effect on state policies toward women, who are typically excluded from political debates and leadership positions. LGBT+ people are unable to enjoy equal political rights in practice due to harsh societal discrimination. Prominent politicians and clerics, including al-Sadr, have incited violence against LGBT+ people, contributing to their persecution by security services and militias.

C. Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?

1/4

Low institutional capacity, widespread corruption, and extensive Iranian influence, among other issues, have hindered elected officials' ability to independently set and implement laws. The turn to street politics and violence by contending Shia blocs paralyzed the functioning of the Iraqi parliament and prolonged the reign of

the unelected caretaker government following the 2021 elections; a government formed in October 2022.

Iran-backed militias, incorporated under the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), are officially part of Iraqi state institutions but in practice set their own policies and undermine the government's ability to set its own agendas. They planned the assassination attempt of then prime minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi in November 2021, repressed political protests, kidnapped and assassinated activists, and attacked US targets in Iraq. The United States and its allies also exert some policy influence through their support for Iraqi Security Forces and other state institutions.

In November, Parliamentary Speaker Muhammad al-Halbousi, a prominent Sunni politician, was removed from the parliament by the Supreme Court, as was another Sunni politician who had been in conflict with al-Halbousi.

In the Kurdistan region, although elected KRG representatives have jurisdiction, in practice, the region is split between the Erbil and Dohuk governorates, under KDP control, and Sulaymaniyah, controlled by the PUK. Each region has its own politically affiliated internal security (Asayish) and military forces (Peshmerga).

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?

0 / 4

Corruption remains a major problem in Iraq and was a key contributor to the 2019 Tishreen protest movement. Political parties siphon funds from the ministries they control, take kickbacks for government contracts, monopolize specific sectors of the economy, and resist anticorruption efforts. The judicial system, itself hampered by politicization and corruption, acts on only a fraction of the cases investigated by the Integrity Commission, one of three anticorruption bodies.

Under both the federal government and the KRG, whistleblowers, investigators, journalists, and private individuals raising corruption concerns have faced arrests, charges of defamation, violence, intimidation, and slander.

The massive September 2023 fire that killed more than 120 wedding guests in Qaraqosh in Nineveh province was attributed to safety lapses that suggested there had been corruption in obtaining building and construction licenses.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?

1/4

The government does not operate with transparency, despite a few official policies promoting openness, including an asset disclosure requirement. The CoR debates the budget, and interest groups are often able to access draft legislation. Government spending, in both Baghdad and the KRG, is not transparent. The PMF's large budget is particularly opaque. The number of fighters drawing salaries is unknown and likely significantly larger than the actual number of active soldiers. The public procurement system is not transparent and is corrupt, with no legal recourse available for unsuccessful bidders. The oil and gas industry also lacks transparency, but the government has made some progress in meeting its commitments to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). There is no comprehensive law on public access to information.

Add Q

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group?

-1

IS's loss of territorial control in 2017 largely halted its campaign to alter religious demography. However, as of late 2023, more than 1.1 million people displaced by IS remain unable to return to their homes, either for security and economic reasons, or because their original communities reject their return or authorities prohibit it. Kurdish authorities encouraged local and substate forces to prevent Arab families displaced by the IS conflict from returning to villages near the Syria-Iraq border and in disputed areas under de facto KRG control, in an apparent attempt to change the region's demography. Displaced families with perceived links to IS who continue to reside in and outside of camps are particularly vulnerable to assault and sexual abuse.

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?

1/4

Iraq's media environment appears lively and diverse, but there are few politically independent news sources. In recent years, social media has been utilized to spread fake news and explicit threats against activists, particularly by Iran-backed militias. Media outlets face restrictions and obstruction in response to their coverage. The Iraqi authorities have assaulted, detained, or arrested journalists for their work and militias have attacked, kidnapped, or killed journalists for their work.

In October 2023, the Al-Baghdadia television channel was temporarily shut down by a government decree for allegedly violating its terms of service, though no specific violations were cited. The channel had aired a program critical of Muqtada al-Sadr a few days prior.

KRG authorities routinely beat, harass, and arbitrarily arrest, detain, and sentence journalists without due process. In its annual report for 2023, the Kurdistan Journalists' Syndicate reported that Kurdish authorities arrested or detained 14 journalists and that there had been 11 cases of journalists being attacked or insulted and 3 cases of journalists being threatened. In addition, there were 6 cases of media equipment being confiscated or broken. While local journalists bear most of the brunt of repression by Iraqi and Kurdish authorities, occasionally foreign journalists are prevented from doing their work as well.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?

1 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of belief, but in practice many Iraqis experience violence and displacement due to their religious identity. The Baha'i community continues to suffer from legal discrimination, as its religious activity continues to be banned, and Baha'is are not recognized as members of a minority religion, preventing them from registering themselves. Since Baha'i marriages are unregistered, children born to such marriages effectively become stateless.

Blasphemy laws remain in the legal code, although enforcement is rare. Children with one Muslim parent, including converts, are automatically designated as Muslim. Conversion from Islam to another religion is banned by law. Atheists largely hide their lack of religious belief due to societal stigma and persecution.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?

1 / 4

Educators have long faced the threat of violence or other repercussions for teaching subjects or discussing topics that powerful state or nonstate actors find objectionable. The country's official curriculum is often augmented in the classroom by religious or sectarian viewpoints. Political activism by university students can result in harassment or intimidation.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?

1 / 4

Commentary on controversial topics, including on social media, is considered to be off limits and at times prompts arrest, docking of salaries, torture, and criminal lawsuits. Social media users and bloggers have faced defamation suits from government officials for criticizing corruption and misgovernance. Authorities have released video footage of detainees to humiliate and intimidate them.

Activists across Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan describe a climate of fear that has led them to self-censor. Authorities arrest individuals, some of them ordinary citizens with no background in activism, shortly after they post messages critical of authorities on social media, indicating that Iraqi and Kurdish authorities are constantly monitoring online platforms.

In January 2023, the Interior Ministry launched a new online platform for citizens to report “social media content that violates public morals, contains negative and indecent messages, and undermines social stability” and announced the formation of a committee to monitor and arrest the people who post such content. In March, a draft of a new set of rules from the Communications and Media Commission (CMC) for publishing on social media was leaked. The rules would give the government the right to crack down on content creators for posts deemed “immoral” or “indecent.” Some social media influencers self-censor content, and in 2023 several deactivated their accounts.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?	1/4
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The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, but protesters are frequently at risk of violence or arrest. These dangers became acute during the Tishreen protest movement against corruption, poor infrastructure and government services, and high unemployment. In 2022, hundreds of people were killed in retaliation for their protest activities.

In 2023, protests dropped significantly in all parts of Iraq, including the Kurdistan region. Small gatherings in front of government ministries organized by unemployed citizens demanding jobs were allowed to proceed peacefully. Notably, the large-scale protests that took place in 2023 were not critical of the Iraqi government, security forces, or quality of life, and they were not met with significant violence. In July, demonstrators stormed the Swedish Embassy in

Baghdad in a protest organized by followers of Muqtada al-Sadr; in late June in Stockholm, a Swedish resident of Iraqi origin publicly tore and burned pages of the Quran, and the July embassy protest was called in advance of another planned desecration of the Quran in Sweden. The demonstrators were confronted by security forces using water cannons, but not the live ammunition or tear gas used against antigovernment protests in the past. Other mass protests took place in October and November and were organized by various civil society groups and Shiite militias to condemn Israel's ongoing war in Gaza and US support for it.

In September, members of the Kurdish community in Kirkuk protested what they described as ongoing erasure of Kurdish identity and presence in the province. The protest took place amid growing tensions between Kurdish residents and Turkmen and Arab residents. During the protests, Iraqi forces opened fire on the crowd, killing four protesters, including an off-duty member of the Kurdish region's armed forces. After the shooting, the Iraqi government initiated an investigation and called on all parties in Kirkuk to exercise restraint.

Following 2020, the number of protests in the Kurdistan region dropped significantly, which local activists claim was the result of security forces' use of unprecedented levels of violence against protesters. In 2023, Kurdish authorities linked both to the KDP and the PUK continued to prevent protesters from gathering and attacked and arrested peaceful protesters and journalists covering protests, regardless of the demonstrations' messages.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 because there was no repetition of past years' mass-casualty violence against protesters, and demonstrations on certain issues were able to proceed without significant interference, though crackdowns continued in some cases.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work?	2 / 4
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Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) enjoy societal support and a relatively hospitable regulatory environment, though they must register with the government and obtain approval from the commission responsible for suppressing Baathism. For international NGOs, registration is cumbersome and

often requires payment of bribes. In Kurdistan, registration of NGOs is straightforward, but NGOs must renew their registration annually.

Militias have threatened, assaulted, kidnapped, tortured, raped in captivity, assassinated, and planted explosive devices at the homes of multiple critics and activists (and their family members), particularly those involved in the Tishreen protest movement. In February 2023, leading Iraqi environmentalist Jassim al-Assadi was kidnapped by an armed group and held for two weeks; he stated after his release that he was subjected to severe torture while captive.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?

2 / 4

Labor laws allow for collective bargaining (even by nonunionized workers), protect the rights of subcontractors and migrant workers, and permit workers to strike, among other rights. However, public sector workers are not allowed to unionize, there is no legal prohibition against antiunion discrimination, and workers do not have access to legal remedies if fired for union activity. Some state officials and private employers discourage union activity with threats, demotions, and other deterrents.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?

0 / 4

The judiciary in Arab-majority Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan is influenced by corruption, political pressure, violent intimidation and occasional killings, tribal forces, and religious interests. The lines between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches are frequently blurred, and executive interference in the judiciary is widespread. Many Iraqis turn to tribal bodies to settle disputes, even those involving major crimes.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?

0 / 4

Criminal proceedings in Iraq are deeply flawed. Arbitrary arrests, including arrests without a warrant, are common. Detainees are frequently denied access to lawyers, who when available are often prevented access to crucial public documents. Terrorism cases have been prone to fundamental violations of due process, with human rights groups describing systematic denial of access to counsel and short, summary trials with little evidence that the defendants, who are often allegedly associated with IS, have committed specific crimes.

Repeated promises to investigate and prosecute members of Iran-backed militias responsible for a wave of assassinations, assassination attempts, and kidnappings of activists across southern Iraq have largely not been upheld by political leaders. Several named suspects are protected by political parties, and the overwhelming majority of cases remain unsolved. Efforts to locate victims of kidnappings have not successfully obtained the release of those who have disappeared.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?

1 / 4

The end of large-scale combat with IS significantly improved the security environment in Iraq. Though the organization remained active as a clandestine terrorist group, it no longer controls Iraqi territory or civilian populations, and its ability to operate was diminished. The insurgency and the collective punishment policies adopted by the Iraqi Security Forces in response have threatened the physical safety of residents.

The militias that recaptured large swaths of Iraqi territory from IS have also engaged in war crimes such as pillaging, forcible displacement of Sunnis, kidnappings, and torture. Over 600 Sunni men and boys who were kidnapped by the PMF during the recapture of western provinces of Iraq in 2016 have not been heard from since.

Turkish military forces have carried out drone strikes, artillery shelling, and ground incursions into Iraqi Kurdistan to combat the Kurdistan Workers' Union (PKK) guerilla group. Data released in 2022 shows that since 2015, the Turkish military has killed at least 98 civilians. Others, including Yazidi civilians, have been displaced en masse in the Kurdistan-Turkey border region.

Tensions between Iran and the United States continued to play out on Iraqi soil in 2023. In October, November, and December, Iraqi militias backed by the Iranian government claimed responsibility for a wave of drone attacks on al-Asad military base in Anbar and other bases that housed US military forces as retaliation for US support of Israel in the ongoing war in Gaza.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?

0/4

Women face widespread societal bias and discriminatory legal treatment under the law. Sexual harassment in the workplace is prohibited, but victims rarely pursue formal complaints. Same-sex relations are not explicitly prohibited, but people risk violence if they are perceived as members of LGBT+ communities. Police forces, militias, and the family members of LGBT+ people have murdered, kidnapped, tortured, raped, confined, and abused LGBT+ Iraqis in recent years. The state and nonstate perpetrators of such violence have enjoyed impunity, which has rendered reporting such abuse to the authorities futile or even dangerous. In August 2023, the CMC issued a decree banning media outlets from using the term “homosexuality” and ordering them to replace it with “sexual deviancy” when describing same-sex sexual relations. It also banned the use of the term “gender,” which powerful political actors had argued was linked to LGBT+ culture.

Members of a given ethnic or religious group tend to suffer discrimination or persecution in areas where they represent a minority, leading many to seek safety in other neighborhoods or provinces. People of African descent suffer from high rates of extreme poverty and discrimination.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?

1/4

Freedom of movement has improved somewhat as areas formerly controlled by IS were brought back under government control. However, large-scale destruction of housing and infrastructure, the presence of sectarian or partisan militias, and the ongoing threat of violence has made it difficult for many displaced people to return home. The renewed IS insurgency and the Iraqi Security Forces' corresponding response, as well as fighting between the Turkish military and the PKK in northern Iraq, have constrained the freedom of movement of residents in rural western and northern Iraq.

The KRG also continues to prevent Arab families from returning to villages on the border with Syria, from which they fled during fighting between the Peshmerga and IS in 2014.

Women require the consent of a male guardian to obtain a Civil Status Identification Document, which is needed to access employment, education, and many social services. Women do not need such consent to apply for a passport, per the Passport Law of 2015.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?

1/4

Iraqis are legally free to own property and establish businesses, but observance of property rights has been limited by corruption and conflict. Families perceived to be affiliated with IS living in displacement are particularly vulnerable to confiscation or takeover of their property. Business owners face demands for

bribes, threats, and violent attempts to seize their enterprises. Contracts are difficult to enforce. Women are legally disadvantaged with respect to inheritance rights and may face pressure to yield their rights to male relatives.

In Baghdad's middle- and upper-class neighborhoods, such as Jadriya and Karrada, pro-Iranian militias have used threats and violent intimidation to force owners of large homes to give up their property, expanding a practice previously employed against Sunnis and Christians in the capital. In Iraqi Kurdistan, the recent construction boom has sometimes come at the expense of local landowners and farmers, whose fields are confiscated without notice or compensation.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?

1/4

Forced and early marriages are common, especially in the context of displacement and poverty. Marriage for those aged 15 is legal with parental approval. Laws on marriage and divorce favor men over women. No law banning domestic violence exists, and Iraqi husbands are allowed to "punish" their wives and children. Iraqi women's rights organizations' efforts to compel the parliament to pass a law banning gender-based violence have been unsuccessful.

Rapists can avoid prosecution if they marry their victims; spousal rape is not prohibited. The law also allows reduced sentences for those convicted of so-called honor killings, which are seldom punished in practice. These types of crimes typically involve a male relative targeting a woman (sister or wife) or an LGBT+ person.

Both men and women face pressure to conform to conservative standards on personal appearance and face harassment, detention, and abuse by state actors and relatives for diverging from traditional appearance or mannerisms.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?

1/4

As of 2023, over 2,500 Yazidi women and children who had been kidnapped by IS during the 2014 genocide of Yazidi people remain missing. Many of them were likely forced into sexual slavery or forced labor. Exploitation of children, including through forced begging and the recruitment of child soldiers by militias, is an ongoing problem. Foreign migrant workers frequently work long hours for low pay and are vulnerable to forced labor. According to the US State Department's 2023 *Trafficking in Persons* report, human trafficking continues unabated throughout Iraq—at times with the protection of corrupt officials—and internally displaced persons, refugees, migrant workers, and LGBT+ people are particularly vulnerable. Child labor is prevalent.



On Iraq

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Country Facts

Population

44,500,000

Region

Middle East

Global Freedom Score

30/100 **Not Free**

Internet Freedom Score

43/100 **Partly Free**

Other Years

2023

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