

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	1379
Land:	Irak
Kilde:	Amnesty International
Titel:	Report on the human rights situation
Udgivet:	7. april 2021
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	12. april 2021

Document #2048571

AI – Amnesty International

Iraq 2020

Dissent continued to be severely repressed through excessive use of force against protesters, arbitrary arrests, torture and other ill-treatment, unlawful killings, enforced disappearances and attacks on freedom of expression. Security forces killed at least 600 protesters by using live ammunition and other excessive force during demonstrations that started in October 2019. Unidentified gunmen believed to be militia members targeted tens of activists, and killed, abducted and subjected dozens to enforced disappearance – at least six remained disappeared. Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) security forces violently dispersed protests and arrested scores of protesters. Restrictions of movement and other measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 adversely impacted internally displaced people (IDPs). The authorities resumed the closure of camps, closing at least 10, subjecting thousands of people to secondary displacement and impeding their access to humanitarian aid. IDPs with perceived ties to the armed group calling itself the Islamic State (IS) continued to be subjected to collective punishment and remained at risk of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance. Thousands of others remained missing after being subjected to enforced disappearance by Iraqi security forces – including the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) – while fleeing IS-held territories. Killings of women were reported in the media. Yezidi children and women who survived IS enslavement faced significant difficulties in accessing rights and reparations. IS resumed military operations against civilians and military targets, carrying out bomb attacks in cities and assassinating community leaders.

Background

In March, to curb the spread of COVID-19, Iraq banned entry to travellers from several countries, closed its border with Iran and imposed a nationwide lockdown for two weeks. Intermittent nationwide lockdowns followed throughout the year. Similar measures were imposed in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I).

Nationwide protests that began in October 2019, calling for better employment opportunities and public services, and an end to government corruption, continued in the first months of 2020 until they were temporarily halted by the outbreak of COVID-19. Smaller protests resumed in May, most notably in the cities of Baghdad, Basra and Nasriya. Protesters demanded accountability for violations by security forces, including killings and enforced disappearances of protesters.

In the KR-I, protests were held throughout the year over delayed or unpaid salaries to civil servants.

By the end of June 2020, over 4.7 million IDPs had returned to their areas of origin. However, returns decreased overall through the second quarter of 2020, partly due to COVID-19 restrictions, and more than 1.2 million remained displaced, 207,000 of them in camps, 97,600 in critical shelters and 915,000 in secondary or informal settlements such as unfinished or abandoned buildings in several governorates.

On 3 January, a US drone strike in Baghdad killed Iranian general Ghasem Soleimani in a targeted attack.

On 7 May, a new central government was formed, headed by Mustafa Al-Kadhimi.

On 15 June, Turkey’s Ministry of National Defence announced Operations Claw-Eagle and Claw-Tiger, targeting members of the Kurdistan Workers Party and Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK) in the north of the KR-I. It subsequently carried out air strikes in the KR-I, reportedly killing at least five Kurdish civilians. Intermittent Iranian shelling targeting PJAK members inside the KR-I continued throughout the year.

Excessive use of force

Iraqi security forces continued to use excessive and unlawful force against largely peaceful protests that had started in 2019. Security forces used live ammunition and military-grade tear gas grenades, killing dozens of protesters in Baghdad, Basra, Karbala, Diyala, Najaf and Nasriya. A PMU faction also used live ammunition against anti-government protesters in Basra, killing at least one person and injuring four others.

Arbitrary arrests and detentions, and torture and other ill-treatment

Federal security forces continued to arbitrarily arrest activists and protesters, arresting thousands of protesters in the first two months of the year alone. By June, most protesters had been released.

In January in Baghdad, armed members of Iraq’s Presidential Guard beat protesters, including children, and arrested others. In Basra, security forces violently dispersed protesters, with some children being beaten until they lost consciousness. Other protesters were subjected to ill-treatment that could amount to torture.¹ In May, security forces arrested at least three people, one of them under the age of 18, as they were heading to protests in Baghdad’s al-Khilani square, and beat and sexually assaulted them, according to medical workers. The Prime Minister ordered the arrest of members of the security forces who had been near where the incident occurred.

Freedom of expression and assembly in the KR-I

KRG security forces raided and shut down news outlets in the governorates of Dohuk and Erbil, confiscating equipment and beating and arresting journalists who had been covering protests.

On 7 October, local police and KRG security forces raided the home of journalist Sherwan Sherwani in Erbil and arrested him at gunpoint without explanation. He was held incommunicado until 26 October and the next day he was finally able to meet his lawyer. The KRG authorities later stated that he was facing charges of “endangering public safety” under the Iraq Penal Code.

KRG security forces, accompanied by armed men in civilian clothes, also dispersed protests. In May, in the city of Dohuk in the KR-I, they violently dispersed a gathering of teachers and civil servants protesting against delayed payment of salaries, arresting at least 167 protesters and media workers. Most were released the same day or the following week, but at least five remained in detention after the local authorities charged them under Article 2 of KR-I Law No. 6 of 2008 for “the misuse of electronic devices” for their role in organizing the protest. The KRG initially said it had dispersed the protest because the protesters had failed to obtain a permit to hold the event, but subsequently cited COVID-19 measures as the reason. All those detained were eventually released on bail. However, in August, one of the protest organizers was arrested along with his son from their home.²

In December, protests broke out in Sulaymaniyah and other areas of the KR-I against unpaid wages and corruption. Kurdistan authorities met protesters with excessive force, leading to the death of tens of protesters, some as young as 17. Authorities also arrested and released several activists and journalists, while also severely restricting the internet and banning press coverage of the protests.

Unlawful killings and enforced disappearances

Throughout the year, unknown gunmen and PMU members targeted activists for assassination or abduction, killing at least 30 in Baghdad, Nasriya and Basra. Attempts were made on the lives of more than 30 others, who escaped with injuries. By the end of the year, 56 activists had been subjected to enforced disappearance. Those subjected to enforced disappearance during the 2019 protests remained missing, including human rights lawyer Ali Jaseb Hattab, who was abducted by PMU members in the southern city of Amarah on 8 October 2019.

IDPs, including children, with perceived affiliation to IS were subjected to enforced disappearance after their arrests at checkpoints, camps and in their areas of origin. Thousands of men and boys were still missing after being arbitrarily detained for suspected links to IS and subjected to enforced disappearance by central Iraqi forces while fleeing IS-held areas between 2014 and 2018. They included hundreds who had been subjected to enforced disappearance in Anbar governorate.

Impunity

The newly appointed Prime Minister ordered investigations into the killing and injuring of protesters since 1 October 2019, promising compensation for their families. However, by the end of the year, no results of these investigations had been made public, fuelling intermittent protests across the country.

In May, the Prime Minister ordered the closure of the headquarters of a PMU faction in Basra and the arrest of PMU members the morning after an attack on protesters in the city.

In September, the Prime Minister ordered counter-terrorism forces to rescue an abducted activist in the city of Nasriya, but the activist remained missing.

Internally displaced people

The authorities continued to close and consolidate IDP camps, subjecting thousands of IDPs to secondary displacement. Some IDPs were forcibly removed from tents, and electricity supplies were cut, in efforts to close the camps. These operations were temporarily halted in March due to restrictions of movement to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and resumed in November.

IDPs – mostly female-headed families – with perceived affiliation to IS, continued to face obstruction, evictions and confiscation and/or destruction of their homes when returning or attempting to return to their areas of origin. Security agents continued to block and hinder their access to civil status documentation and, in some cases, arrested lawyers who tried to help families obtain these documents.³

Access to humanitarian assistance for IDPs and returnees worsened after December 2019 when the authorities

suspended the issuing of access letters and visas to NGO workers.

The KRG continued to prevent Arab IDPs originating from disputed territories to return to their areas of origin.

Impact of COVID-19 restrictions

COVID-19 measures that restricted movement and reduced humanitarian workers' presence in IDP camps adversely affected IDPs, who rely solely on humanitarian aid to survive, and left them further isolated. As a result, some IDPs lost their jobs outside the camps or were forced to leave the camps in order to keep their jobs.

Humanitarian aid workers reported that their programmes that did not support public health services, particularly the prevention of the spread of COVID-19, were reduced. This adversely affected reconciliation efforts essential to facilitate the safe return to their areas of origin of IDPs with perceived ties to IS. The move to virtual schooling meant education completely stopped for many displaced children as they did not have access to the internet and electronic devices. Lack of access to these devices similarly affected urban children.

Lockdowns reduced the capacity of the Iraqi and KRG authorities to operate normally, causing the closure of courts and civil status directorates. This resulted in further delays in obtaining justice for many IDPs with perceived ties to IS, already facing administrative obstacles due to collective punishment.

Rights of Yazidis

Iraq's central government and the KRG fell short of their obligations to respect and guarantee the rights to health, education, legal identity and family unity of Yazidi child survivors of IS as well as Yazidi women and girl survivors of IS enslavement.

Hundreds of Yazidi children who had been abducted by IS, enslaved, forced to fight, raped and otherwise tortured, and subjected to other egregious human rights abuses, continued to face significant challenges after their return to what remained of their families and relatives. Many were unable to re-enrol in school and faced barriers to obtaining new or replacement civil status documents essential for accessing basic rights in Iraq. Psychosocial services and programmes available to them fell short of meeting these children's rights and needs.

Many Yazidi women who had been abducted by IS and given birth as a result of rape were forced to separate from their children because of religious and societal pressures.⁴

Violence against women and girls

The COVID-19 lockdown exacerbated the vulnerability of women and girls. Media and civil society organizations reported an increase in domestic violence, resulting in the deaths of women, and in one incident, severe injuries to a young girl.⁵

Unlawful killings

Violent activity by IS, which had ceased since 2018, resumed in 2020 and targeted security forces and a smaller number of civilians. Renewed IS military operations in several areas of Iraq were announced. IS activity killed at least tens of civilians during 2020.

At Baghdad airport in September, at least five children and two women were killed by a rocket apparently aimed at US personnel. Other diplomatic personnel, including a UN convoy, and affiliated institutions in Baghdad and in the governorates of Najaf and Ninewa, were also targeted. No groups claimed responsibility for these attacks.

Death penalty

Authorities continued to hand down death sentences and at least 50 men convicted of terrorism were executed, according to credible reports.

-
1. [Iraq: Protest death toll surges as security forces resume brutal repression \(Press release, 23 January\)](#)
 2. [Iraq: Police arrests teacher and protest organizer: Badal Abdulbaqi Aba Bakr Barwari \(MDE 14/2396/2020\)](#)
 3. [Iraq: Marked for life – displaced Iraqis in cycle of abuse and stigmatization \(MDE 14/3318/2020\)](#)
 4. [Iraq: Legacy Of terror: The plight of Yazidi child survivors of Isis \(MDE 14/2759/2020\)](#)
 5. [Iraq: Open letter to Iraq's new Prime Minister \(MDE 14/2290/2020\)](#)

ecoi.net summary:

Report on the human rights
situation covering 2020

Country:

Iraq

Source:

[AI – Amnesty International](#)

Original link:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/iraq/report-iraq/>

Document type:

Periodical Report

Language:

English

Published:

7 April 2021

Document ID:

2048571

Austrian Red Cross
Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum
Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien
T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583
F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589
info@ecoi.net

Contact
Imprint & Disclaimer
F.A.Q.
Data Protection Notice

ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

