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- **Countries:**  
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[http://www.ecoi.net/local\\_link/347461/479037\\_en.html](http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/347461/479037_en.html) (accessed 24 October 2017)



## Suspected ISIS Ties? Some Aid Workers May be Shying Away

Hundreds of thousands of civilians in Iraq have suffered horribly at the hands of the Islamic State, also known as ISIS. Now the families of those suspected to have joined the extremist group are paying a price as Iraqi forces continue to retake territory.

Across federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, security forces are [holding](#) families of ISIS affiliates, often referred to by local authorities and communities as "[ISIS families](#)," displaced by the fighting, and [severely](#) restricting their [movements](#).

To be clear, anyone displaced by fighting that is not accused of a crime has the right to return home if there are no longer military operations there, and under Iraqi law, to be compensated for property destroyed by the conflict. They also have the right to move freely throughout the country and resettle elsewhere if they prefer. Authorities can't lawfully use camps for displaced people as open-air prisons.

Yet Iraqi security forces appear to be doing just that, and pushing aid workers to be complicit in these unlawful actions. In mid-September, security officials told several international and local organizations responsible for managing camps 60 kilometers south of Mosul to draw up lists of so-called "ISIS families" so they can "keep an eye on them." Several camp management teams told me they have already provided these lists, which include hundreds of families in camps that are housing at least 15,000 families displaced by recent fighting.

These families may not be arrested or prosecuted, but a more probable scenario is what we have witnessed in Anbar governorate, west of Baghdad, over the past two years. Civilians fled to camps for displaced people during the fighting in cities like Ramadi and Fallujah, and once fighting ended, security forces required them to obtain security clearance to return home. Those the security forces considered to be the families of ISIS affiliates were denied [clearance](#) and are now stuck indefinitely in the camps. For how long? No one knows.

It is disturbing enough to see security forces punishing families for the actions of their relatives, but it is particularly troubling to see aid workers helping them violate the rights of these families. While aid workers have repeatedly faced challenges in complying with security force requests and protecting those in need, they should stand strong and insist on the principles of neutrality and independence and avoid complicity in efforts to impose collective punishment on women and children.

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