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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Iraq is a constitutional parliamentary republic. The outcome of the April 2014 parliamentary elections generally met international standards of free and fair elections and led to the peaceful transition of power from former prime minister Maliki to Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi. In October 2014 parliament approved the new prime minister's *final cabinet nominations*, *successfully* completing the government formation process. Civilian authorities did not always maintain effective control of the security forces: the regular armed forces and domestic law enforcement bodies; the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), a state-sponsored umbrella military organization composed of approximately 40 militia groups, which were predominantly Shia; and the Peshmerga – the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) principal military force. On April 7, the Council of Ministers announced that the PMF was an official body reporting to the prime minister, but the prime minister's ability to command the PMF remained a source of disagreement and debate.

Sectarian violence fueled by the actions of Da'esh (also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) continued to divide the country. Destabilizing violence occurred throughout the year as government forces fought to liberate territory lost to Da'esh, principally in Arab Sunni and some mixed ethnosectarian areas. Armed clashes between Da'esh and government forces caused civilian hardship. By year's end the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) had surpassed 3.2 million. The country also hosted 245,000 Syrian refugees, most of whom have settled in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR). Although donor funding increased, government response fell short of rapidly rising humanitarian demands, and displaced populations became destitute, leading some citizens to seek refuge abroad.

Severe human rights problems were widespread. Da'esh committed the overwhelming number of serious human rights abuses, including attacks against civilians, especially Shia but also Sunnis who opposed Da'esh; members of other religious and ethnic minorities; women; and children. Some Shia PMF reportedly committed human rights violations. Numerous reports continued during the year of Shia PMF killing, torturing, kidnapping, and extorting civilians. Simultaneously, to a much lesser extent, government forces reportedly engaged in abuses against civilians in liberated areas, such as arbitrary detentions and limits on freedom of movement. Sectarian hostility, widespread corruption, and lack of transparency at all levels of government

and society weakened the government's authority and worsened effective human rights protections.

Observers reported other significant human rights-related problems: disappearances; torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; harsh and life-threatening conditions in detention and prison facilities; arbitrary arrest and lengthy pretrial detention, sometimes incommunicado; denial of fair public trial; insufficient judicial institutional capacity; ineffective implementation of civil judicial procedures and remedies; delays in resolving property restitution claims; arbitrary interference with privacy and homes; child soldiers; limit on freedom of expression, including press freedoms; violence against and harassment of journalists; undue censorship; social, religious, and political restrictions in academic and cultural matters; limits on freedoms of peaceful assembly and association; limits on religious freedom due to violence by extremist groups; restrictions on freedom of movement; refugee and IDP abuse; discrimination against, including exclusion from decision-making roles, and societal abuse of women and ethnic, religious, and racial minorities; trafficking in persons; societal discrimination and violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons; and limitations on worker rights.

Information about investigations or prosecutions of abuses by government officials and members of the security forces was not publicly available. Impunity effectively existed for government officials and security forces personnel.

Terrorists committed the overwhelming number of serious human rights abuses. Da'esh members committed acts of violence on a mass scale, including killing by suicide bombings, improvised explosive devices, execution-style shootings, public beheadings, and other forms of executions. They also engaged in kidnapping, rape, enslavement, forced marriage, sexual violence, committing such acts against civilians from a wide variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds, including Shia, Sunni, Kurds, Christians, and members of other religious and ethnic groups, as well as religious pilgrims. Reports of Da'esh perpetrating gender-based violence, recruiting child soldiers, and destroying civilian infrastructure and cultural heritage sites were credible and common. The government initiated investigations of Da'esh's human rights abuses, such as the reported June 2014 massacre of as many as 1,700 largely Shia Air Force recruits at Camp Speicher. Official conclusions were not publicly available.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

During the year the security situation remained unstable due to widespread fighting between the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Da'esh (see section 1.g.) and, to a lesser extent, Shia PMF. There were numerous reports that government forces, independent militias, and terrorist groups committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

While civilian fatalities, including civilian police that the government used in military operations, decreased from 2014, terrorist groups continued to target civilians, police, and security forces. From January 1, 2014, to October 31, 2015, the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) recorded at least 55,047 civilian casualties resulting from the conflict, with 18,802 killed and 36,245 wounded. Baghdad was most affected with almost half of the total fatalities.

During the year the conflict with Da'esh caused an increase in violations against children, especially in Anbar, Diyala, and Ninewa Governorates. According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), violations against children included killing and maiming, recruitment or use as

soldiers, sexual violence, attacks against schools or hospitals, denial of humanitarian access for children, and abduction.

Security forces reportedly committed extrajudicial killings, although identification of specific killers was rare. Ministry of Interior personnel reportedly tortured detainees to death, according to unverified accounts from human rights organizations (see section 1.c.). Amnesty International (AI) reported that Peshmerga also carried out destruction of Arab homes in areas recaptured from Da'esh.

In many cases Shia PMF operated independently and without oversight or direction from the government. According to AI, on January 26 Shia PMF and government security forces singled out and killed at least 56 and possibly more than 70 Sunni men in Barwana, a village west of Muqdadiya in Diyala Governorate. Witnesses told AI that Badr Brigades members, wearing green and red bandanas and armbands, went house to house and asked the men to come outside with their identification documents. Witnesses also said that among the perpetrators were members of the Ministry of Interior's Special Weapons and Tactics force, as well as the Muqdadiya police force. Witnesses heard gunfire and then found the bodies of the men shot and some of their fingers amputated. Witnesses said they found their family members shot and blindfolded with their hands tied behind their backs. On January 28, the prime minister ordered an investigation into these killings. On March 20, the Commission of Inquiry submitted its report to the parliament. AI reported that as of April, the authorities had not contacted any of the victims' families or informed them of any steps investigators took.

Terrorist activities throughout the country increased significantly during the year, particularly with Da'esh assaults on cities across the west and north. Da'esh frequently employed suicide attacks and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs). Some attacks targeted government buildings or checkpoints staffed by security forces, while others targeted civilians. For example, local and international media reported that on July 17, Da'esh claimed responsibility for a truck bombing that killed at least 115 persons at a crowded marketplace in Khan Bani Saad in Diyala Governorate. The victims, the majority of whom were Shia, had gathered to mark the end of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. Attacks continued on playgrounds, mosques, government sites, civilian homes, and markets, as well as attacks directed at members of the security forces, public officials, journalists, ethnic and religious minorities, and local leaders opposed to Da'esh. Da'esh claimed responsibility for many such attacks via its social media platforms.

Da'esh reportedly carried out attacks against civilians in Baghdad's Shia-majority neighborhoods. UNAMI reported that improvised explosive devices, suicide vests, and VBIEDs caused at least half of all verified casualties in the first half of the year. For example, on January 30, an attack in al-Bab al-Sharji, Baghdad, killed 62 civilians, injured 109, and damaged or destroyed local shops. On July 5, local media reported that a bomb exploded near al-Obeidi District, killing four and injuring 14. A second blast killed four and injured 11 at a restaurant in Jisr Diyala, and two other bombs detonated at bus stops in Shulla and in a northeastern suburb of Baghdad, killing seven persons and injuring nine. On August 13, Da'esh detonated a VBIED at Jameela market in Sadr City in Baghdad, killing at least 45 and injuring 72.

Da'esh forces murdered Sunni tribal leaders; Sunnis who cooperated with the government, including previous Sons of Iraq members; and Sunni clerics who refused to recognize Da'esh and its caliphate. Da'esh also targeted Sunni civilians who cooperated with the ISF. UNAMI reported that on January 1, Da'esh executed 15 members of the Jumaili tribe in al-Shihabi area of Anbar Governorate. On February 6, Da'esh burned alive three civilians in front of residents of Hit District in Anbar Governorate. In both cases Da'esh targeted civilians for purportedly cooperating with the ISF by providing information on Da'esh members, offering food to the ISF, or for being related to ISF members.

Numerous reports of Da'esh abductions, public executions, and massacres of Sunni tribes emerged as members of these Sunni tribes increasingly turned against the terrorist group. On October 4, Da'esh executed 70 members of the Abu Nimr tribe in Ramadi in Anbar Governorate, according to international media. The victims were reportedly male relatives of members of ISF, police, and tribal fighters.

Spillover across the porous border from the conflict in Syria continued to destabilize the security situation in the country. The government did not control the border with Syria, and Da'esh was able to facilitate movement of fighters and materiel into Iraq.

AI reported that a prominent Sunni tribal leader who had called for sectarian reconciliation, Sheikh Qassem Sweidan al-Janabi, was kidnapped on February 13 in Dura in Baghdad. Authorities found the bodies of the sheikh, his son, and his bodyguards a few hours later in Baghdad. Janabi had pressed for the return of 70,000 displaced Sunni residents of Jurf as Sakhr in Babil Governorate.

International human rights organizations criticized the increasingly sectarian nature of Shia PMF activity and the lack of sufficient government oversight. The prime minister repeatedly called for the elimination of independent militias and ordered all such groups to fall under ISF authority. Shia religious leaders also called for Shia volunteers to fight under the command of the security forces and condemned violence against civilians, including destruction of personal property. On April 7, the Council of Ministers announced that the PMF were an official body reporting to Prime Minister al-Abadi, although the prime minister's ability to command the PMF remained a source of disagreement and debate.

Ethnic-based fighting escalated in ethnically mixed governorates in post-Da'esh clearing operations. Following an October 22 car bombing and an exchange of fire on November 12 in Tuz Khurmatu, in Salah ad Din Governorate, Peshmerga forces and Asayish (Kurdistan internal security) clashed with Popular Mobilization Forces reportedly composed of Shia Turkmen, Badr Brigades, the Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, and Kita'ib Hizballah. The two sides supported by armed local residents from their respective communities reportedly committed punitive actions including razing homes, burning villages, looting, and engaging in mass arrests. Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that Shia Turkmen fighters from the PMF detained and tortured between 150 and 175 Sunni Arabs from Tuz Khurmatu, killed between eight and 34 of those abducted, kept approximately 50 in captivity at year's end, and released the rest (see section 1.d.).

There were significantly fewer reports of killings or other sectarian violence in the IKR than in the rest of the country. Minority groups reported threats and attacks targeting their communities in non-IKR areas that the KRG effectively controlled.

There were no known developments in other cases of arbitrary or unlawful killings reported in 2014.

b. Disappearance

Disappearances and kidnappings were regular occurrences, and some kidnappers who did not receive a ransom killed their victims. There were also cases reported in which the abductor killed the kidnapped individual despite receiving ransom payments. Most kidnappings appeared to be financially motivated. Da'esh forces and illegal armed groups engaged in widespread kidnapping of members of Iraq's various ethnic and religious communities. The Ministry of Human Rights reported that the numbers of missing persons from June 2014 to June 2015 had reached 2,935. According to UNAMI estimates, there were numerous "execution style" killings of victims kidnapped for ransom to intimidate members of their communities.

Criminal groups were most often associated with abductions outside of Da'esh-controlled areas. Kidnapping cases increased throughout the year, with criminals and some militias exploiting the security situation to carry out kidnappings, either for personal gain or for sectarian reasons. In March according to HRW, members of Shia PMF, including Kita'ib Hizballah and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, apprehended and detained up to 200 residents from Jalam areas of ad-Dawr, Salah ad Din Governorate. A local member of parliament called for a government investigation; however, at year's end the whereabouts of at least 160 abductees were unknown. In September gunmen kidnapped 18 Turkish construction workers in Sadr City, according to international media. Two were released in Basrah two weeks later, and the remaining 16 were released on September 30. In December unknown gunmen kidnapped 26 Qatari members of a hunting party in the Muthanna desert. At year's end the Qatari citizens were still missing.

In areas it controlled, Da'esh engaged in frequent abductions of members of the security or police forces, ethnic and religious minorities, and other non-Sunni communities. In September local and international media reported that Da'esh kidnapped 127 children in Mosul, allegedly to force them to attend extremist camps, where they would learn how to use weapons and participate in suicide attacks. Widely published photographs and videos depicted minors wearing Da'esh uniforms and using semiautomatic weapons. According to Yezidi activists and political leaders, 2,000 of the estimated 5,000 Yezidi men, women, and children kidnapped by Da'esh had been rescued due to assistance from the Office of the KRG Prime Minister and others.

Da'esh kidnappers also targeted ethnic and religious minorities. According to officials from the Turkmen Women's Association, Da'esh militants kidnapped 500 Turkmen women and children from Tall Afar and Mosul since June 2014. The association claimed that Da'esh militants brutalized the captives and tied at least 25 of the women to electricity poles and raped them in front of their family members.

The International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), an intergovernmental organization, estimated the number of missing persons from the Saddam Hussein era ranged from 250,000 to more than one million and included persons missing due to human rights violations and other atrocities committed during the Saddam regime, as well as persons missing due to the Iran-Iraq War and more recent conflicts. There was no central database for missing persons, and organizations documenting the abuses held the files in warehouses of several governmental ministries. The IKR Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs calculated the number of missing persons based on the number of families seeking assistance, but it was unclear how other ministries calculated their numbers. According to the ICMP, the decentralization and inaccessibility of records were obstacles to progress on missing persons cases.

In May media outlets reported the discovery of a mass grave in western Mosul containing the remains of 80 Yezidis. A representative from the Yezidi Affairs Council in the IKR reported these individuals were likely victims of Da'esh, and the remains showed signs of brutal treatment in captivity. Throughout the year authorities discovered several other mass graves with Yezidi victims of Da'esh. Authorities and returning civilians discovered several other mass graves with Yezidi victims of Da'esh; by year-end approximately 35 mass graves had been reported. In June the Ministry of Human Rights announced that the government exhumed more than 600 bodies