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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. All COI Query Responses are compiled in line with the Common EU Guidelines (2008) and the EUAA Methodology (2023). This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. Please refer to all documents cited.

COI QUERY RESPONSE

IRAQ- INFORMATION ON ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT/SUPPORT

The *International Human Rights Center (Loyola Law School)* in December 2024 reported that: "In Iraq, women frequently endure trauma related to violence, abuse, and societal pressures, making access to mental health services vital. However, Iraqi women suffering from such trauma are faced with a critical lack of accessible mental health support. While local Iraqi organizations, like Support Her, have established systems to provide psychological support and treatment to women in need, equal access to mental health services is a State obligation and thus a more comprehensive mental health infrastructure is necessary."[1]

The *Yazda* in December 2024 points out that: "Psychologist at Yazda "Our team in Sinjar has witnessed how the recent wave of hate speech has deeply affected the Yezidi community. Our Mental Health Counselor shared how clients have expressed heightened fear and anxiety, saying they feel unsafe even in their own communities. Many are reliving the trauma of the genocide, which has been triggered by these hateful messages. This emotional toll is evident in every session. Our doctor also spoke about patients arriving with stress-related physical symptoms, such as headaches and sleep disturbances, directly linked to the hate speech campaigns. These aren't just words—they're creating real, harmful impacts on the mental and physical health of the Yezidi people."[2]

The *European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA)* in November 2024 states that: "Child recruitment amounts to persecution. Instances of child recruitment has been reported in Iraq. The UN verified a total of 32 cases of children (18 boys and 14 girls, as young as age 11) being recruited in 2022, 28 of whom were recruited by the PKK and 4 by ISIL. The UN has conditionally delisted the PMF for the violation of recruitment and use of children. Young boys who were formerly recruited and who suffer from complex trauma or other medical conditions often do not have access to adequate

[1] International Human Rights Center (Loyola Law School) (18 December 2024) NGO Joint Periodic Report on the Government of Iraq's 8th Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (Child marriage), p.8
[2] Yazda (8 December 2024) Under Constant Threat: Hate Speech Against the Yazidi Community in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, p.13

rehabilitation, reintegration and mental health programmes, which exposes them to re-victimisation and re-recruitment."[3]

The *Government of Iraq* published a report in October 2024 stating: "Mental health services have been provided to persons affected by terrorist operations. In that regard, a psychiatric support unit for women and girls has been opened in Jad'ah camp and six psychiatrists have been assigned to provide counselling and advice. In addition, a team has been formed to conduct field visits to the camps and carry out a comprehensive mental health assessment of families."[4]

The *UK Home Office* in August 2024 notes that: "'Mental health services are inadequate. There are two dedicated psychiatric hospitals in the country, Al-Rashad Psychiatric Hospital and Ibn Rushd Hospital, both located in Baghdad. There are psychiatric wards in some general hospitals, as well as some out-patient clinics, often run by international non-government organisations (NGOs) such as Medicins sans Frontieres."[5]

The report further mentioned that: "A letter written by Abdul Rahman Saied, Sirwan Ahmed, Asmaa Metwally and Hani Aiash (medical professionals), entitled 'Iraq's mental health crisis: a way forward?' and published in the 7 October 2023 edition of the medical journal, The Lancet, stated: 'For the past 20 years, mental health in Iraq has been a difficult issue to address as the country has faced wars, conflicts, and political instability… Over 20% of Iraqis have mental illnesses, and that percentage is steadily rising…

'The mental health system in Iraq is not well developed. Iraq passed legislation governing mental health in 2005, but it has not been used to its full potential yet. There are only six specialised psychiatric hospitals in Iraq (two in Baghdad and four in the Kurdistan region), which do not even meet the bare minimum of the demand. Iraq has approximately 0.34 psychiatrists per 100,000 population. Iraq urgently needs mental health services as there is a severe lack of skilled personnel and poor infrastructure, which severely restricts access to care. Several difficulties confronting mental health workers include inadequate training, restricted access to resources, and social stigma against working in mental health. Because there is no public health insurance system to cover the entire population, the Iraqi people rely on the central government-run public health-care system… 'There has been a gradual reduction in the stigma associated with mental health issues, leading more people to seek treatment. 'However, the situation is far from ideal. There is a severe scarcity of mental health experts, and the Iraqi health-care system is still trying to keep up with population needs. Furthermore, many people in Iraq still do not have access to mental health services because of a scarcity of funding for such programmes.'"[6]

This document further states that: "A EUAA MedCOI 2020 response to an information request stated that amitriptyline, venlafaxine, imipramine, and paroxetine (anti-depressants) were available, for example at the Dawa Pharmacy in Baghdad."[7]

[3] European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) (13 November 2024) EUAA Country Guidance: Iraq (November 2024) [3. Refugee status], p.38
[4] Government of Iraq (30 October 2024) National report submitted in accordance with Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21; Iraq [A/HRC/WG.6/48/IRQ/1], p.6
[5] UK Home Office (27 August 2024) Country Information Note - Iraq: Healthcare and medical treatment (August 2024)
[6] ibid
[7] ibid

The *Human Network For Health and Humanitarian Affairs (HUMAN)* in July 2024 points out that: "Survivors of ISIS atrocities, especially women, require specialized medical and psychological care, which is often unavailable or inaccessible."[8]

An article published by *The Lancet* in October 2023 mentioned that: "The mental health system in Iraq is not well developed. Iraq passed legislation governing mental health in 2005, but it has not been used to its full potential yet. There are only six specialised psychiatric hospitals in Iraq (two in Baghdad and four in the Kurdistan region), which do not even meet the bare minimum of the demand. Iraq has approximately 0·34 psychiatrists per 100 000 population. Iraq urgently needs mental health services as there is a severe lack of skilled personnel and poor infrastructure, which severely restricts access to care. Several difficulties confronting mental health workers include inadequate training, restricted access to resources, and social stigma against working in mental health. Because there is no public health insurance system to cover the entire population, the Iraqi people rely on the central government-run public health-care system."[9]

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[9] The Lancet (7 October 2023) Iraq's mental health crisis: a way forward?

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New Humanitarian
Online Newspapers
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
Reliefweb
United Kingdom Home Office
United States Department of State
UNHCR Refworld

Contact Information

Refugee Documentation Centre
Legal Aid Board
48/49 North Brunswick Street
Dublin 7
Ireland

Email: research@legalaidboard.ie