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2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iraq

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The human rights situation in Iraq worsened during the year due to increased federal government restrictions on fundamental freedoms and civic space. In the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, the Kurdistan Regional Government took some steps to address the human rights situation, but its restrictions on fundamental freedoms continued at similar levels to the previous year.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: arbitrary or unlawful killings; disappearances; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; arbitrary arrest and detention; serious abuses in a conflict; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence or threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists, and censorship; significant restrictions on workers' freedom of association; and significant presence of any of the worst forms of child labor.

The government took some steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses. It also investigated allegations of atrocities and other abuses committed by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and, in some instances, reported the convictions of suspected its members under the counterterrorism law.

There were reports of abuses during the year by the Popular Mobilization Commission, a state-sponsored umbrella military organization composed of approximately 60 militia groups referred to collectively and individually as the Popular Mobilization Forces. Although the organization was part of the Iraqi Security Forces and received funding from the government's defense budget, its operations were often outside of and in opposition to government control, and several units were aligned with Iran and received training and resources from the Iran-based Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The government did not consistently investigate these militias' alleged abuses or punish perpetrators. In the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, the Kurdistan Regional Government, including its affiliated Asayish internal security service, Peshmerga military units, and police forces, as well as additional Asayish service, Peshmerga units, and police forces under control of the two primary Kurdish political parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, allegedly committed abuses for which accountability was inconsistent. Abuses by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and other nongovernment actors were inconsistently investigated and punished.

Section 1.

Life

a. Extrajudicial Killings

There were several reports the government, its agents, or nongovernmental militias committed arbitrary or unlawful killings, including extrajudicial killings, during the year.

In November, Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported the government executed five men between April and November, likely in retaliation for submitting anonymous complaints to the United Nations regarding conditions in Nasiriyah Central Prison. HRW reported authorities threatened death row inmates and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) for denouncing prison conditions.

The government took halting and inconsistent steps to bring to justice those responsible for extrajudicial killings.

On December 8, local news outlet *964 Media* reported Rapid Response Forces killed Saif Hassan Najm al-Badri during a protest concerning water distribution in Wasit Province.

Iraqi Kurdish news outlets reported that on July 27 an off-duty member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)-affiliated Peshmerga 70s Commando Force reportedly shot and killed a tea seller during an altercation in Sulaymaniya. This followed a July 16 incident in which another off-duty Commando Force member reportedly killed a teenager in Sulaymaniya. Both individuals were arrested, although details of their detention were not reported. PUK leadership affirmed the perpetrators would face legal accountability but said Sulaymaniya-based authorities, rather than the military court, would determine the punishment.

Human rights organizations reported Iran-aligned militia groups, some of which were affiliated with the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), engaged in killing, kidnapping, and extortion throughout the country, particularly in ethnically and religiously mixed provinces.

On August 9, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) killed two PUK-affiliated Asayish personnel in a forest near the Naram-Sin archeological site on Qaradagh Mountain, according to reports from Kurdish news outlets.

Numerous threats and killings by sectarian, tribal, violent extremist, and criminal elements impaired judicial independence, as judges, lawyers, and their family members frequently faced death threats and attacks. In September, the Iraqi Bar Association reported unknown gunmen killed attorney Haider al-Issawi in front of the al-Haidariya court in Najaf, after he won a case involving a disputed plot of land. Al-Issawi was attacked and beaten two months prior to his killing.

In April, *Rudaw* reported an “honor killing” of a woman, age 19, who was fatally shot by family members because she had reported being raped and thrown off the balcony of her apartment in Erbil.

b. Coercion in Population Control

There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government authorities.

Section 2.

Liberty

a. Freedom of the Press

The federal constitution protected freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media, albeit with restrictions when authorities assessed statements violated public order and morality or expressed support for the banned Ba’ath Party. Media and social activists reported self-censorship for fear of reprisals by the government, political parties, ethnic and sectarian forces, militias, terrorist and violent extremist groups, or criminal gangs.

Individuals were not able to criticize the government publicly or privately without fear of reprisal. Security forces under the Ministry of Interior, within the National Security Service (NSS), or from the PMF, in addition to Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) forces (primarily Asayish), reportedly arrested and detained protesters and activists critical of the central government and

KRG. Paramilitary militias harassed activists and new reform-oriented political movements online and in person, including through online disinformation, bot attacks, and threats or use of physical violence to silence them and halt their activities.

Legal harassment by radical Islamic parties and Iran-aligned militia groups using malicious lawsuits against activists and human rights defenders limited freedom of expression and civic engagement.

The government increasingly targeted social media users. The Ministry of Interior's social media rules included a platform that allowed individuals to denounce or report any content "that violates public morals, contains negative and indecent messages, and undermines social stability." Civil society organizations reported government and militia forces monitored their activists' social media pages, and activists faced harassment or criminal charges based on their social media activity. In December, according to *Shafaq News*, the Al Nakheel Center for Press Rights and Freedoms claimed government entities were illegally targeting the social media accounts of journalists and activists.

On January 25, the al-Karkh Court of Appeal issued a four-month prison sentence to two social media individuals for posting "indecent content" the court stated was a violation of Iraqi customs and traditions.

In the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR), a professor at Halabja University was arrested in May after posting critical Facebook remarks concerning injustice and corruption caused by personal influence.

Physical Attacks, Imprisonment, and Pressure

Journalists continually faced threats, intimidation, and attacks by militia or security forces. In May, the Association for the Defense of Press Freedom in Iraq recorded more than 300 incidents, including 53 arrests, six injuries, 12 armed attacks, and 232 cases of obstruction or beatings, against journalists over the past year. Government forces occasionally prevented journalists from reporting, citing security reasons. Some media organizations reported arrests and harassment of journalists, as well as government efforts to prevent them from covering politically sensitive topics, including security matters, corruption, and government failure to provide adequate services. In the IKR, journalists and media outlets were subject to politically motivated retaliation and discrimination. According to the Organization of Reporters for Rights and Development (ORRD), PUK-affiliated Asayish forces detained Tiwar Media journalist Shakar Sattar at Ashti checkpoint between Sulaymaniya and Koya on May 9. After several days in detention, Sattar was released on bail.

ORRD reported that during the first six months of the year, there were 78 violations committed against 145 IKR-based journalists and social media bloggers. The violations included two arrests of journalists, 59 cases of denial of coverage, and 19 cases of seizure of journalistic equipment.

In May, the annual report of the Press Freedom Advocacy Association stated conditions for journalists and freedom of journalistic work deteriorated in federal Iraq during the preceding 12 months, due to increased frequency in judicial rulings, arrest orders, and judgements in absentia against journalists at a high rate. The report documented 333 violations against journalists, including detentions, arrests, and injuries; raids, storming, or armed attacks on journalists' residences and media offices; and physical assaults, prevention or obstruction of work, and the initiation of lawsuits.

Throughout the country there were reports of beatings, detentions, and death threats against media workers, particularly toward journalists working for opposition-affiliated and nonpartisan outlets. On August 19, KRG-affiliated Asayish forces attacked Zoom Media reporter Aveen Atta in Halajaba and dislocated her shoulder and wrist, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, after Atta reported on a demonstration against the killing of a porter by Iraqi border forces.

Censorship by Governments, Military, Intelligence, or Police Forces, Criminal Groups, or Armed Extremist or Rebel Groups

The law prohibited producing, importing, publishing, or possessing written material, drawings, photographs, or films that violate public integrity or decency. The penalties reportedly included fines, imprisonment, and travel bans. Fear of violent retaliation for publishing facts or opinions critical of political factions led to self-censorship and inhibited free expression.

Federal government and KRG oversight and censorship sometimes reportedly interfered with media operations, at times resulting in the closure of media outlets, restrictions on reporting, denial of access to public information, and interference with internet service. On June 18, the Supreme Judicial Council of Iraq ordered the General Passports Directorate to place a travel ban on journalist and television presenter Qahtan Adnan Mahmoud al-Mashhadani for "indecent content."

By year's end, the KRG had not implemented its Access to Information Law, passed in 2013 to allow journalists and citizens access to government information and data. Journalists and press freedom advocates claimed the judiciary was not impartial in lawsuits against the KRG for failure to provide information or in press freedom cases as required by the Access to Information Law.

Nongovernmental and quasi-governmental actors, including militias outside of state control, terrorist groups, and criminal organizations, threatened journalists with violence for reporting on sensitive subjects. According to Freedom House, militias attacked, kidnapped, and killed journalists.

Political parties strongly influenced or controlled outright most of the several hundred daily and weekly print publications, as well as dozens of radio and television stations, social media platforms, and social media influencers.

Political parties in the IKR, specifically the PUK and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), prioritized access to the outlets they or their members owned or controlled. IKR-based outlets without strong political or financial backers reported difficulty accessing information or reporting venues. The Halabja Journalist Syndicate (HJS) and press freedom watchdog Ronus Federation (RF) reported the KRG prime minister's security team prevented nine media outlets from covering the prime minister's first-ever visit to Halabja in February, while allowing KDP-affiliated K24 and AVA Media to cover events. HJS and RF issued statements condemning the prevention of coverage and alleged it violated the IKR Press Law and the Access to Information Law.

NGOs reported the two IKR ruling parties and their affiliated personnel used their ties with social media companies to restrict public criticism and abuse content moderation reporting channels. After an IKR ruling party highlighted a critical social media post by Kurdish outlet Zoom Media for purported copyright violations, Meta Platforms Inc. shut down Zoom Media's social media page in August, according to Metro Center.

b. Worker Rights

Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining

The federal constitution stated citizens had the right to form and join unions and professional associations. The labor law, however, prohibited the formation of unions independent of the government-controlled General Federation of Iraqi Workers and in workplaces with fewer than 50 workers. The labor law did not apply to public-sector employees. The law also considered individuals employed by state-owned enterprises (which made up approximately 10 percent of the workforce) as public-sector employees. Private-sector employees in worksites employing more than 50 workers could form workers committees, subdivisions of unions with limited rights. The labor law did not prohibit antiunion discrimination or provide reinstatement for workers fired for union activity. The law did not explicitly prohibit interference in union activity. The law allowed workers

to select representatives for collective bargaining, even if they were not members of a union, and afforded workers the right to have more than one union in a workplace.

The law did not explicitly protect the right to engage in collective bargaining or the right to strike in the private sector but set out regulations governing the exercise of these rights. Civil servants were prohibited from engaging in strikes. Collective bargaining negotiations were subject to a 30-day time limit, after which the government had authority to intervene and impose a settlement. Collective bargaining agreements did not necessarily apply to all workers in the bargaining unit. The law required striking workers to provide advance notification, and to go forward they had to submit to compulsory conciliation, binding arbitration, or both in courts appointed by the Ministry of Labor. The law did not protect workers from dismissal or retaliation for participating in strikes. The government sometimes violated private-sector employees' collective bargaining rights. Unions had the right to demand government arbitration.

Labor courts had the authority to consider labor law violations and disputes, but no information was available concerning enforcement, including whether procedures were prompt or efficient or whether penalties were commensurate with those for other laws involving denials of civil rights, such as discrimination. Strikers and union leaders reported government officials threatened and harassed them. The KRG effectively enforced laws protecting the freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the right to strike for workers, all of which were based on federal labor law.

There were more than 15 unions, associations, and syndicates in the IKR. All heads of unions and syndicates were men, but board members included women. Each union had a separate women's committee for women workers' affairs. The women's committees were supported by local NGOs to support gender equality and advance women's union leadership in the IKR. The Kurdistan Confederation of Workers was an umbrella organization that coordinated among these groups. According to the Independent Human Rights Commission of Kurdistan, most union syndicates and associations had not held elections for several years as required by law.

Forced or Compulsory Labor

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/.

Acceptable Work Conditions

Wage and Hour Laws

The national minimum wage, set by federal labor law, was above the poverty line. Most employees worked for the government. The law limited the standard workday to eight hours, with one or more rest periods totaling 30 minutes to one hour, and the standard workweek to 48 hours. The law permitted up to four hours of overtime work per day and required premium pay for overtime work. For industrial work, overtime could not exceed one hour per day. Violations of the law were common in the entertainment, construction, and industrial sectors.

Occupational Safety and Health

The government set occupational safety and health (OSH) standards that were appropriate for the main industries of oil, agriculture, fisheries, and forestry. The law stated employers should reduce daily working hours for hazardous or exhausting work. The law provided workers the right to remove themselves from a situation endangering health and safety without prejudice to their employment but did not extend this right to civil servants or migrant workers.

The inadequate legal and regulatory framework, combined with the country's high level of violence and insecurity, high unemployment, large informal sector, and lack of meaningful work standards, resulted in substandard conditions for many workers. Workplace injuries reportedly occurred frequently, especially among manual laborers, but no data were available on the specific number of industrial accidents that resulted in death or serious injury.

The latest information for on-the-job injuries showed that in 2022 there were 522 work injuries in the governmental sector, and 4,011 work injuries in private sector, mostly in services and construction sectors.

The KRG followed OSH requirements outlined in federal labor law. Labor courts in the IKR settled disputes between employees and employers, including those not covered by labor legislation.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement

The government did not effectively enforce minimum wage, overtime, or OSH laws or impose penalties on violators. The government did not effectively enforce regulations governing wages or working conditions. It was unclear whether legal responsibility for identifying unsafe situations lay with OSH experts or with the workers. Penalties for violations were not commensurate with those for similar crimes such as fraud or negligence and were never applied against violators. The number of labor inspectors available was not sufficient to ensure compliance with labor laws. According to labor laws, labor inspectors had the authority to make unannounced labor inspections and impose sanctions.

According to the most recent reporting available, from the International Labor Organization (ILO), in 2022, 55 percent of total employment was in the informal sector and the number of persons with informal jobs almost 67 percent of the total employment. The ILO estimated a majority of workers in the country's private sector, who constituted 40 to 50 percent of the workforce, worked for informal-sector entities. These private-sector workers did not receive adequate workplace protections and benefits and often were paid lower average wages than their public-sector counterparts. The ILO found that refugees and asylum seekers worked predominately in the informal sector, where they were exposed to poor work conditions.

c. Disappearance and Abduction

Disappearance

There were reports of disappearances perpetrated by or on behalf of government authorities, including Federal Police and PMF units.

On August 30, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported receiving 618 tracing requests for missing persons during the first half of the year. The fate and whereabouts of 208 persons were determined.

In October, Amnesty International reported the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) arrested and forcibly disappeared six persons in 2023 and 2024 from the Jeddah-1 Rehabilitation Center for periods of time between 14 days and three months.

NGOs reportedly documented six cases of enforced disappearance by nonstate armed groups in Samaraa.

Prolonged Detention without Charges

The federal constitution and laws prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and provided for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court. Nevertheless, the government generally did not observe these requirements, and there were numerous reports of arbitrary arrests and detentions, predominantly of Sunni Arabs, including internally displaced persons (IDPs). The law required authorities to register the detainee's reason for detention and legal basis for arrest within 24 hours of the detention, a period that could be extended to a maximum of 72 hours in most cases. For offenses punishable by death, authorities could legally detain the defendant as long as necessary to complete the judicial process.

Local media and human rights groups reported authorities arrested suspects in security sweeps without warrants, particularly under the antiterrorism law, and frequently held such detainees for prolonged periods without charge or registration. The government periodically released detainees, usually after concluding it lacked sufficient evidence for the courts to convict them, but many others remained in detention pending review of other outstanding charges.

Human rights organizations, activists, and journalists reported KRG authorities arbitrarily detained journalists, activists, and protesters. Those detained maintained they were not informed of the charges against them, with some reporting mistreatment during detention. Lengthy pretrial detentions were a systemic problem and frequently equaled or exceeded the maximum penalty for the alleged crime without due process or judicial review, particularly for those accused of having ties to ISIS. According to government officials, between February and October, the state and individuals brought charges against 30,000 detainees, while 27,000 others were still awaiting charges.

The large number of detainees, undocumented detentions, slow processing of criminal investigations, insufficient numbers of judges and trained judicial personnel, authorities' inability or reluctance to use bail or other conditions of release, a lack of information sharing, bribery, and corruption all reportedly contributed to the backlog in court hearings.

Lengthy pretrial detentions were particularly common in areas liberated from ISIS. Authorities reportedly held numerous detainees without trial for months or years after arrest, particularly those detained under the antiterrorism law. Authorities sometimes held detainees incommunicado or without access to defense counsel, presentation before a judge, or arraignment on formal charges within the legally mandated period. Prison and detention center authorities sometimes delayed the release of exonerated detainees or inmates due to lack of prisoner registration or other bureaucratic problems, or extorted bribes from prisoners prior to their release at the end of their sentences.

In the IKR, authorities reportedly held detainees for extensive periods in pretrial detention. Bureaucratic obstacles frequently prevented prosecutors and defense from carrying out their work, and trials were delayed for administrative reasons.

d. Violations in Religious Freedom

See the Department of State's annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/.

e. Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/.

Section 3.

Security of the Person

a. Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The federal constitution prohibited torture and forced confessions, but there were credible reports government officials employed them. Torture in jails, detention facilities, and prisons was often hidden from effective legal oversight. The law did not define what constituted torture and gave judges full discretion to determine whether a defendant's confession was admissible. Courts routinely accepted forced confessions as evidence, which in some ISIS-related counterterrorism cases was the only evidence considered. Reports from local NGOs indicated government officials employed torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. Federal Police, the PMF, and Iran-aligned militia groups often reportedly operated with impunity.

Government forces, including Federal Police, the NSS, and the PMF, reportedly abused and tortured individuals – particularly Sunni Arabs – during arrest and pretrial detention and after conviction. Prisoners reportedly faced torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment in detention facilities run by the Ministry of Interior and, to a lesser extent, by the Ministry of Defense.

In October, Amnesty International reported seven citizens who were arrested by security forces from Jeddah-1 Rehabilitation Center had faced torture and mistreatment. One female detainee said she was subjected to electric shocks, kicks, beating with a stick on her neck, and sexual harassment during her interrogation, as well as being forced to witness the torture of other detainees. Family members of these detainees said they observed obvious effects of torture, such as broken fingers and dislocated shoulders.

According to the Iraqi Center for Documenting War Crimes, at least 50 persons were tortured to death in prisons in the first four months of the year.

At the end of the year, the Ministry of Justice had yet to conclude an investigation into a video clip purporting to show a prisoner being tortured to death inside the Taji central prison in August 2023.

Prisons conditions in federal Iraq were exacerbated by gross overcrowding. The Ministry of Justice reported on June 28 that government prisons were operating at 300 percent capacity. The large number of alleged ISIS members detained exacerbated systemic overcrowding in government-run prisons.

Despite the COR Human Rights Committee's 2023 denouncement of the situation in women's prisons as a human rights violation, noting the majority of inmates were detained solely because they came from ISIS-related families, by some reports 60 children ages 12 and below were in detention with their ISIS-affiliated mothers during the year.

The Independent Human Rights Commission in the IKR, an independent commission under the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament, reported IKR correctional centers suffered from long-term problems of overcrowding, inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities, use of violence during preliminary detention, and outdated infrastructure at women's and juvenile centers. The limited medical staff was unable to provide adequate medical services.

The federal government and the KRG reported they took steps to address allegations of mistreatment in government-administered prison and detention facilities, including installing anonymous complaint boxes inside the prisons, but neither conducted investigations of credible allegations of mistreatment.

Federal Iraq and IKR law prohibited the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), and it was not commonly reported in federal areas or the IKR. A March report by UNICEF listed Iraq among the countries where FGM/C was occurring.

b. Protection of Children

Child Labor

See the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/findings/ .

Child Marriage

While the legal minimum age of marriage was 18, the law allowed a judge to permit children as young as 15 to marry if maturity and physical capacity were established and the guardian did not present a reasonable objection. The law criminalized forced marriage but did not automatically void forced marriages that were consummated. The government reportedly made few efforts to enforce the law.

Traditional early and forced marriages of girls, including so-called temporary marriages, occurred throughout the country, reportedly because of conflict, safety concerns, and economic instability in many cases. According to the most recent available data, from a December 2023 report by UNICEF, 28 percent of women ages 20 to 24 were first married before age 18; seven percent of women ages 20 to 24 were first married before age 15.

In the IKR, the legal minimum age of marriage was 18, but KRG law allowed a judge to permit a child as young as 16 to marry if the individual was entering into the marriage voluntarily and had permission from a legal guardian. KRG law criminalized forced marriage and suspended, but did not automatically void, forced marriages that were consummated. According to the KRG High Council for Women and Development, refugees and IDPs in the IKR engaged in child marriage and polygamy at a higher rate than other IKR residents. Some Muslim men in the IKR who desired to marry a second wife applied in courts outside the IKR to acquire a child bride, since federal laws were not as strict.

c. Protection to Refugees

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, returning refugees, or asylum seekers, as well as other persons of concern. The country was not a state party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. The status and treatment of refugees were administered under the Political Refugee Act No. 51 of 1971, which recognized only political and so-called military refugees, and fell short of providing effective protection or rights to all refugees and asylum seekers. The federal government did not grant residency to asylum seekers.

On July 10, the KRG implemented Administrative Instructions (AIs) to standardize asylum procedures across the IKR. This included defining who qualified as an asylum seeker, an explicit reference to the principle of nonrefoulement, and nondiscriminatory access to asylum, regardless of mode of entry in the country or nationality. The AIs upheld the rights of asylum seekers during their stay in the IKR, including freedom of movement within the IKR and access to public services such as health care and education, as well as access to court and employment opportunities in line with applicable laws.

As of September, UNHCR estimated more than 327,000 refugees and asylum seekers resided in the country, including more than 295,000 Syrian refugees. Additionally, UNHCR reported that as of the end of November, more than 40,000 refugees had arrived from Lebanon since the escalation of hostilities with Israel during the year.

Provision of First Asylum

Although the law recognized political and so-called military refugees, the federal government did not grant this status to Syrian refugees and asylum seekers. Rather, it considered Syrian refugees to be "displaced from border areas of Syria and received for humanitarian reasons." The KRG, however, recognized the status of Syrians as asylum seekers, and nearly 99 percent of Syrian refugees in Iraq resided in the IKR.

A directive from the Prime Minister's Office instructed that displaced Lebanese arriving in Iraq due to the conflict with Israel would be considered "guests of Iraq" rather than "displaced" or "refugees," and facilitated their access to national systems, including education and health.

The process for seeking asylum lacked procedural safeguards, including no effective right of appeal, and access was largely nationality-based with gaps for highly vulnerable groups, including members of certain minority groups and nationalities. For example, the IKR did not allow Afghan nationals seeking asylum to register for refugee status.

d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement

A very small number of Jewish citizens lived in Baghdad; Jewish communities were absent in the rest of federal Iraq.

The law criminalized any activities promoting normalization of relations with Israel. The law prohibited Jews from joining the military or holding jobs in the public sector.

Antisemitic rhetoric erupted during the Gaza conflict that began October 7, 2023, after Hamas's attack on Israel. Harassment of Jews by militia groups on social media occurred.

Among numerous examples of athletes refusing to compete against or participate in medal ceremonies with Israeli athletes, on June 3, the president of the Paralympic Swimming Federation announced swimmer Mohammad Alaa Ashour withdrew from the World Championship final in Germany to protest competing against an Israeli athlete, show solidarity with Palestinians, and reject normalization of relations with Israel.

According to unofficial statistics from the KRG Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, there were as few as 150 Jewish families in the IKR. The KRG did not apply the federal government's anti-Zionist laws and relied on a separate IKR law, which provided protections for the rights of members of religious minority groups, including Jews. The Jewish community did not worship in public reportedly due to fears of retribution, discrimination, or violence by extremists.

For further information on incidents of antisemitism in the country, whether or not those incidents were motivated by religion, and for reporting on the ability of Jews to exercise freedom of religion or belief, see the Department of State's annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/.

e. Instances of Transnational Repression

There were reports the government engaged in acts of transnational repression.

Threats, Harassment, Surveillance, or Coercion

Activists from the 2019 Tishreen movement who fled the country reported receiving regular threats to their own and their families' safety from government officials. Some activists reported they could not return home because of criminal charges in retaliation for leading antigovernment protests.