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Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Iraq: Perceived collaborators

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November 2021

Preface

Purpose

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and analysis of COI for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims (as set out in the [Introduction](#) section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into 2 parts: (1) an assessment of COI and other evidence; and (2) COI. These are explained in more detail below.

Assessment

This section analyses the evidence relevant to this note - that is information in the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw - by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment of, in general, whether one or more of the following applies:

- a person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm
- that the general humanitarian situation is so severe that there are substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk of serious harm because conditions amount to inhuman or degrading treatment as within [paragraphs 339C and 339CA\(iii\) of the Immigration Rules](#) / Article 3 of the [European Convention on Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#)
- that the security situation is such that there are substantial grounds for believing there is a real risk of serious harm because there exists a serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in a situation of international or internal armed conflict as within [paragraphs 339C and 339CA\(iv\) of the Immigration Rules](#)
- a person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- a person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- a claim is likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and
- if a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

Country of origin information

The country information in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2013. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

The structure and content of the country information section follows a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to this note.

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date(s) in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate and balanced, which is compared and contrasted where appropriate so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture is provided of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote. Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

Feedback

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the Country Policy and Information Team.

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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Assessment

Updated: 15 November 2021

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

- 1.1.1 Fear of persecution and/or serious harm by non-state actors because the person has, or is perceived to have, collaborated with western organisations (including but not limited to western coalition forces).

1.2 Points to note

- 1.2.1 For the purposes of this note, a 'perceived collaborator' is a person who has worked for coalition forces (several countries' armed forces led by the United States and the United Kingdom) and/or international (particularly western) organisations.
- 1.2.2 This note does **not** include information about and an assessment of risk faced by those who have been perceived as collaborators of Daesh. For information about and assessment of such claims see the country policy and information note on [Iraq: Sunni Arabs](#).

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2. Consideration of issues

2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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2.2 Exclusion

- 2.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
- 2.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 2.2.3 For further guidance on the exclusion clauses and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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2.3 Convention reason(s)

- 2.3.1 Actual or imputed political opinion.
- 2.3.2 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason.
- 2.3.3 For further guidance on Convention reasons see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.4 Risk

a. Legal context

- 2.4.1 The Upper Tribunal, in the case of [SMO, KSP & IM \(Article 15\(c\); identity documents\) Iraq CG \[2019\] UKUT 400 \(IAC\)](#), heard on 24-26 June 2019 and promulgated on 20 December 2019, considered whether perceived collaborators have a raised risk profile in relation to Article 15(c) and held:

‘This group was considered in [BA \(Iraq\)](#) to be likely to be at risk in those parts of Iraq which were under ISIL [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant] control or had high levels of insurgent activity. The risk was thought to be lower in Baghdad, although there was evidence at that time to show that groups including ISIL were active and capable of carrying out attacks there. That assessment must be revisited because of several durable changes. Firstly, ISIL is no longer in control of swathes of territory in Iraq. Secondly, there is considerably less involvement of Western armed forces in what is accepted by the respondent to be an internal armed conflict in Iraq. Thirdly, there is considerably less evidence of ISIL and other insurgent groups carrying out attacks in Baghdad. We do not consider that this group would be at enhanced risk in Baghdad as there is insufficient recent evidence to support such a conclusion. In respect of the risk to such individuals in the Formerly Contested Areas, the situation is clearly different to that considered in [BA \(Iraq\)](#). As noted at 1.9 of the EASO report on Targeting of Individuals “working for the coalition was less sensitive than in the past.” In areas where ISIL remains active, its primary target is those associated with central or local governance or the security apparatus and there is little recent evidence to show that those with a current or historical connection to Western organisations or armed forces would be at enhanced risk on that account alone. That is not to say that such an association is irrelevant for the purposes of the sliding scale analysis; were such an association to become known at a fake checkpoint, for example, then such an individual might well be at enhanced risk as compared to a civilian without such an association. We accept, therefore that a past or current association to a Western organisation or allied forces is a relevant factor in the Article 15(c) analysis, albeit one with less significance than before.’ (paragraph 310)

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b. Western collaborators

- 2.4.2 Available evidence indicates that there had been historic targeting of persons working with coalition forces by Shia militias, with incidents of harassment, threats and murders being reported. However, following the withdrawal of US troops in December 2011 and the rise of Daesh in Iraq the Shia militias mainly focused their efforts on combatting the group (see [Actors of violence – Shia militias \(Popular Mobilisation Forces/Units\)](#)).
- 2.4.3 Available evidence indicates that following Qasem Soleimani’s assassination in Baghdad in January 2020 there has been an increase in improvised explosive device (IED) attacks on Iraqi-operated supply convoys carrying cargos on behalf of the US-led coalition (see [Incidents of targeting](#)). The attacks on logistic convoys that have taken place since Soleimani’s assassination appear to target the convoys themselves as opposed to

specifically targeting the person who is working for the Western coalition or organisation, often as a way of trying to dissuade other Iraqi nationals from working with foreign forces and weaken the US led coalitions logistical support base in Iraq. The available evidence indicates that while these attacks do happen and could indirectly target perceived collaborators, in general, people who work for the coalition or other Western organisations are not at real risk of being intentionally targeted by Shia militias and experiencing mistreatment which would amount to persecution. Decision makers must, however, consider each case on its merits, with the onus on the person to demonstrate that they would be at risk on return.

- 2.4.4 Despite a number of news and media agencies publishing articles regarding interpreters who fear persecution at the hands of the Shia militias, CPIT could not find any evidence to indicate that any attacks on them, or any other persons who had worked with Western organisations in similar roles, had taken place for a number of years in the sources consulted (see [Types](#), [Incidents of targeting](#) and [Bibliography](#)).
- 2.4.5 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.5 Protection

- 2.5.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from militias belonging to the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMFs) (also known as 'hybrid' actors), they are unlikely to be able to avail themselves of the protection of the authorities due to the PMFs integration into the Iraq's security apparatus in March 2018.
- 2.5.2 Where the person's fear is of persecution and/or serious harm from non-state actors, decision makers must assess whether the state can provide effective protection.
- 2.5.3 However, while the Iraqi authorities in areas outside of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) are likely to be willing they are generally unable to provide effective protection. The security forces in the KRI are more effective than in the south/central areas of Iraq and may be able to provide effective protection, depending on the profile of the person. For more information see the country policy and information note [Iraq: Actors of protection](#).
- 2.5.4 For further guidance on assessing the availability of state protection, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.6 Internal relocation

- 2.6.1 In general, internal relocation is possible to the areas of Iraq where the risk does not extend to, that is areas a particular Shia militias are not active. For more information see the country policy and information note [Iraq: security and humanitarian situation](#) and [Iraq: internal relocation, civil documentation and returns](#).
- 2.6.2 For further guidance on internal relocation see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.7 Certification

- 2.7.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 2.7.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

Section 3 updated: 15 November 2021

3. Perceived collaborators

3.1 Types

- 3.1.1 An article by McClatchy ('a leading local media company in 30 U.S. markets' with a 'dedication to quality journalism, community service, and free expression'¹) DC Bureau, dated March 2013, noted that people who worked with Americans were viewed as 'enemy collaborators'.² The same source additionally noted that in 2008 'militants' targeted those who served in supporting roles³.
- 3.1.2 An article in the Washington Post, dated September 2015, noted that there were '50,000' men and women who served as interpreters for the US military in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, it is not clear how many of this number worked in Iraq⁴. An article in The New York Times, dated February 2017, noted: 'Thousands of interpreters, known to troops as "terps", worked for the USA in missions in Afghanistan and Iraq.'⁵
- 3.1.3 An article in the Daily Caller ('a for-profit independent news outlet' and 'one of America's largest and fastest-growing news publications'⁶), dated April 2016, noted that 'thousands of interpreters risked their lives working on behalf of the United States during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan'.⁷
- 3.1.4 An article in Task & Purpose, (an organisation with 'a mission to inform, engage, entertain, and stand up for active-duty military members, veterans and their families'⁸), dated July 2016, noted that interpreters who worked with the American armed forces were embedded with units and were used during meetings with Iraqi city leaders, security patrols, combat missions and sometimes emergency medical situations after bombings. Often they translated documents or videos that troops would find in underground terrorist caches⁹.
- 3.1.5 An article in Fortune ('a global media organization' which is 'committed to producing journalism that meets the highest standards of accuracy, fairness, transparency, and lawfulness'¹⁰) dated January 2017, quoted Allen Vaught, a former US Army captain who worked in Fallujah: "A lot of translators were trying to get the hell out of there because they had a mark on their head for working with U.S forces...They're viewed as collaborators"¹¹.

¹ McClatchy, '[About – History](#)', no date

² McClatchy DC Bureau, '[U.S. pledge to help Iraqis who aided...](#)', 14 March 2013

³ McClatchy DC Bureau, '[U.S. pledge to help Iraqis who aided...](#)', 14 March 2013

⁴ Washington Post, '[Forget the Syrian refugees...](#)' 17 September 2015 (subscription required)

⁵ New York Times, '[Visa Ban Amended to Allow Iraqi Interpreters Into U.S.](#)' 2 February 2017

⁶ The Daily Caller, '[About us](#)', no date

⁷ The Daily Caller, '[Left Behind: Iraqi Interpreter Faces Death Threats...](#)', 20 April 2016

⁸ Task & Purpose, '[About Task & Purpose](#)', no date

⁹ Task & Purpose, '[This Iraqi Interpreter ... Finds Peace in Texas](#)', 14 July 2016

¹⁰ Fortune, '[About Us](#)', no date

¹¹ Fortune, '[Trump Refugee Order Dashes Hopes of Iraqis ...](#)', 28 January 2017

- 3.1.6 The February 2017 New York Times article noted: ‘In addition to interpreting, they also advised US soldiers through Iraqi politics, tribal disputes and social customs.’¹² The same article additionally noted that interpreters who worked for the United States between 2003 and 2011 worked ‘often at great...risk’ to themselves and their families...They were given American nicknames like “Tony” and “Bobby” and “Max”. The article said that they ‘often wore scarves across their faces to mask their identities’.¹³
- 3.1.7 An article published by Al Jazeera (‘an independent news organisation funded in part by the Qatari government’¹⁴), dated February 2017, noted that ‘tens of thousands’ of Iraqis worked with the Americans as engineers, drivers or cultural consultants (as well as interpreters), for which they face ‘grave dangers’.¹⁵ The same source additionally noted that in December 2006, an armed group targeted a family because one member worked at a US military base in Baghdad¹⁶.
- 3.1.8 Between November 2020 and May 2021 a number of news agencies published articles regarding Iraqi interpreters who had worked for the U.S. led coalition in Iraq, including the British army, who now fear retaliation from Daesh and Iranian-backed Shia militias. In November 2020 the Washington Post published an article entitled ‘They served alongside U.S. soldiers. Now they fear that Iran’s allies in Iraq will strike back.’ which stated:
- ‘Iraqis who have worked closely with the U.S. military in their country have grown increasingly alarmed that they could be targeted for attack, fearing their personal identifying information has been obtained by Iranian-backed militias.
- ‘At a time when militia attacks on supply convoys for the U.S.-led coalition and against other U.S. interests have been on the rise, the sharing of this information — including names, addresses and license plate numbers — could present a heightened threat to hundreds of Iraqis who have long worked with American forces, in particular as translators.
- ‘...In June [2020], a list purporting to contain personal information about Iraqis admitted to the Union III military base in Baghdad, the main headquarters of the U.S.-led military coalition, was published by the Sabreen news agency, which is affiliated with Iranian-backed militias. The list included the names, addresses and identification numbers of Iraqi drivers and the make, model, year and license plate numbers of their cars, among other specifics, and the document bore logos of the U.S.-led military coalition and the U.S. Defense Department. The Washington Post could not independently verify the authenticity of the list.
- ‘Separately, two Iraqi translators said they witnessed militiamen who were stationed near an Iraqi military checkpoint check a list containing personal information that had been acquired from a military coordination center run by the Iraqi security forces.

¹² New York Times, [‘Visa Ban Amended to Allow Iraqi Interpreters Into U.S.’](#), 2 February 2017

¹³ New York Times, [‘Visa Ban Amended to Allow Iraqi Interpreters Into U.S.’](#), 2 February 2017

¹⁴ Al Jazeera, [‘About Us’](#), no date

¹⁵ Al Jazeera, [‘What happens to Iraqis who worked with the US military?’](#), 1 February 2017

¹⁶ Al Jazeera, [‘What happens to Iraqis who worked with the US military?’](#), 1 February 2017

“When we realized where the information had come from, we were shocked. The list contains everything. Phone numbers, ID numbers, even our real names,” said one translator from Baghdad. The Post reviewed a copy of the list and confirmed this description.

“It’d be an easy mission to hunt us down,” the translator said. “They have all the information now. What if this list now goes online?” This man, like seven other translators interviewed for this story, spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal.¹⁷

3.1.9 The same source continued:

“We have interpreters right now who call me to say they have been threatened when they visit the bazaar or even just when they leave their homes,” said an Iraqi translator who coordinates a network of former support staff. “Some people have been told: ‘We can’t touch U.S. citizens here, but we can touch you.’”

‘This translator, who lives in the northern city of Kirkuk, recalled a recent evening when he was leaving a busy cafe. A man he didn’t recognize approached from behind and tapped his shoulder firmly. “I turned around and he looked at me directly. He told me I had to leave this city,” recounted the translator.

‘...Although Iranian-backed militias participated in the U.S.-supported campaign to oust the Islamic State from its self-proclaimed caliphate, these armed groups have recently been escalating their attacks on American interests in Iraq, especially after the U.S. killing of top Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani in Baghdad in January [2020].

‘Militias in Iraq have described the translators as traitors. Iraqis driving equipment and logistics convoys on behalf of the U.S.-led coalition have been targeted. There have been at least 30 rocket or improvised explosive attacks on the convoys since the summer, according to figures compiled by Joel Wing, an Iraq expert and author of the Musings on Iraq blog, which chronicles security and political developments. At least two people have been killed and another eight have been wounded.’¹⁸

3.1.10 In December 2020 the BBC published an article entitled ‘Iraqi interpreters “stalked by death squads” for helping the British’ which stated:

“I am frightened. You can feel the threat. At any time, someone will hit the door of my house and shoot five bullets,” Ali says. “One bullet for me, one bullet for my wife and three bullets for my three daughters.”

‘Ali (not his real name) is terrified that Iraqi militiamen will target him and his family because he worked for the British army as an interpreter.

‘...[I]n January this year [2020], everything changed. On the orders of Donald Trump, Iran’s most powerful military commander, Qasem Soleimani, and his Iraqi ally, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy chief of Popular Mobilisation forces (PM), were assassinated in Baghdad, angering the country’s powerful Iran-backed paramilitaries.

¹⁷ Washington Post, [‘They served alongside U.S. soldiers. Now they fear Iran’s...’](#), 12 November 2020

¹⁸ Washington Post, [‘They served alongside U.S. soldiers. Now they fear Iran’s...’](#), 12 November 2020

'Western troops became targets and the Iraqis they worked with were branded traitors.

"The atmosphere became very tense. Even some of the Iraqi forces that were being trained by the coalition started to treat us like an enemy. I don't know, maybe because they were loyal to another country rather than Iraq," Ali says.

'...Unknown militia groups have issued several warnings, telling Iraqis who are working with coalition forces to leave their jobs immediately.

'One of them calls itself Ashab Al Kahf or Companions of the Cave. It has claimed responsibility for many rocket attacks on coalition bases and the US embassy in Baghdad.

'The group posted a statement on Telegram offering money to Iraqi interpreters who work with the US-led coalition.

"Today we offer forgiveness to those who did wrong to themselves and their country by serving the Americans and British and other enemies of Iraq... We will provide you a monthly salary and safety if you get in touch with us," the statement reads.

'The "salaries" they offered start from \$3,000 for translators and up to \$50,000 for those who are helping the US and British intelligence services.

"There was a hidden message," says Ahmed. "If you don't co-operate with us, we'll consider you an enemy. The difference between us and the coalition is they hit them with Katyusha rockets, but they will kill us with a bullet."¹⁹

3.1.11 In May 2021 the Independent published an article entitled 'They helped British soldiers in Iraq. Now they've been left behind to die' which stated:

'Ali [N.B. it is not clear if this is the same interpreter as mentioned above in the BBC article or another interpreter using the same pseudonym] is neither a spy nor a criminal, but a former translator for the British military. He is one of eight interpreters who say they fear for their lives after being employed by a subcontracting company to work with British special forces at Camp Taji, about 40km north of Baghdad. From 2018 until the pandemic hit in March last year [2020], they were translating for British advisers who ran training programmes for Iraqi special forces at the base.

'They claim their personal information, which was requested on behalf of British forces last March, was shared with the Iraqi security forces without their consent and so ended up in the hands of powerful Iranian-backed Shia militia groups in Iraq. These groups violently oppose the presence of foreign forces in the country and have repeatedly threatened Iraqis who work with them.

'Calls for blood and revenge have surged since US forces assassinated powerful Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani and his Iraqi lieutenant Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in an airstrike on Baghdad airport in January last year.

'Since then, there has been a spike in attacks on coalition interests across the country, amid calls for all foreign troops to leave.

¹⁹ BBC, [Iraqi interpreters 'stalked by death squads' for helping the British](#) 30 December 2020

‘...in October, the same news agency [that published a list purporting to contain personal information about the interpreters], Sabreen, published a statement by one of the militias – a relatively new group called Ashab al-Kahf, or People of the Cave – that was a veiled threat against interpreters working with British forces specifically.

‘The eight translators knew at that point that they had to go into hiding. One of them even received three AK-47 bullets, representing each member of his family including his child, in an envelope with a message threatening punishment and reading: “You will not have mercy from us.”

‘Another, called Salem, tells The Independent that a group of strange men appeared on his road in a white SUV, interrogating his neighbours about his work.

“They were watching the house. They knew my name. It was at that point I decided to leave my house, and send my wife and kid away. I haven’t seen them since then.

“I can’t walk in the streets. I’m caged,” he says with desperation.

‘...Seen as traitors by the myriad militias in Iraq, several translators employed to translate for the British military have in the past been kidnapped, tortured and killed, while their families have also been targeted. The coalition and the Iraqi security forces have often been powerless to protect them.’²⁰

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3.2 Actors of violence – Shia militias (Popular Mobilisation Forces/Units)

3.2.1 The article by McClatchy DC Bureau, dated March 2013 noted that Iraqis who worked with Americans, who applied for special US visas, and their advocates, said that the Shia militia threatened them²¹.

3.2.2 An undated post by The List Project to Resettle Iraqi Allies (TLPTRIA), which describes itself as a ‘non-profit operating in the U.S., founded with the belief that the United States Government has a clear and urgent moral obligation to resettle to safety Iraqis who are imperilled due to their affiliation with the United States of America’²² stated: ‘The British conducted little contingency planning throughout their withdrawal from Basrah in Southern Iraq [in 2007]. As they withdrew, militias systematically hunted British-affiliated Iraqis, warning them to “get out or die.”’²³

3.2.3 A Landinfo response (translated into English), dated 2016, which cited various sources, noted:

‘One cannot in general terms today say that the Shiite militias promotes threats or violent [sic] to people who work for, or are / have been involved, foreign companies in Iraq. This was a relevant issue in the period before the Americans pulled their troops out of Iraq in December 2011, and especially in the most violent period between 2005 and 2008. According to the UNHCR

²⁰ Independent, [‘They helped British soldiers in Iraq. Now they’ve been left behind to die’](#), 11 May 2021

²¹ McClatchy DC Bureau, [‘U.S. pledge to help Iraqis who aided...’](#), 14 March 2013

²² TLPTRIA, [‘About’](#), no date

²³ TLPTRIA, [‘A History of Just and Unjust withdrawals’](#), no date

occurred albeit [sic] still some attacks against people who had worked for foreign forces or organizations in 2012.

'Before the Americans pulled out of Iraq, were people who worked for the US-led coalition subjected to abuse by militias, including the Shiite, who wanted to liberate Iraq from occupation forces. This affected not only Iraqis who assisted the forces directly, but also others who worked in the civil, such as in the oil sector.

'Today however, the situation is different. The Shiite militias are now, in spite of internal feuds and power struggles, mainly focused on combating the threat from the Islamic State (IS).

'What may trigger these militias to again threaten foreign players in Iraq, and possibly their local partners, the return of foreign ground forces. This is a bone of contention in Iraqi politics. As a result of IS's seizure of power in parts of central Iraq, the foreign forces, including American, again returned to the country. These have mainly been doing consulting and training of Iraqi forces. As of August 2014, they also assisted the Iraqi army with air strikes against IS targets. These forces participation in ground operations has so far been minimal and largely confined to the Kurdish forces' operational areas.

'Influential militia leaders have stated that they will not allow foreign ground forces, and has threatened violent reactions if US troops will participate in ground operations

'The influential Shiite politician Moqtada al-Sadr, who in recent months has collected thousands of people in Baghdad in demonstrations against the government's lack of reforms, has also come with direct warnings to the American and British Embassy in Baghdad. When al-Sadr in March planned to enter the well-guarded Green Zone, where the main government offices and foreign embassies are located, he warned the US and Britain that they would meet reactions if they intervened.'²⁴

3.2.4 The response added:

'Working for foreigners has not in itself something of apostasy from Islam to do [sic]. The term "apostate" was still used rhetorically whether people who worked for the foreign forces, especially in the most violent period in Iraq between 2005-2008.

'Today this is no longer a relevant issue in the face of Shiite militias. Shiite militias aimed to get the foreign forces out of Iraq, and that goal was reached in December 2011. What may happen if the US military presence in Iraq increases in the future, as signalled [sic] by the US authorities, is not easy to predict (Browne 2016). However, there is nothing as yet indicate they will get in the same situation as in 2005-2008. Both sjiamilitsene [Shia militia], Iraqi authorities and the US military have a common goal in fighting IS, and the US military contribution is specifically linked to this. Iraqi soldiers who work closely with the foreign forces, is today, though among the most vulnerable in Iraq. However, it is not the Shiite militias as attacks against them, but IS.'²⁵

²⁴ Landinfo, '...The situation for the people who worked for foreign companies', April 2016 (translation)

²⁵ Landinfo, '...The situation for the people who worked for foreign companies', April 2016 (translation)

- 3.2.5 An article in Al-Monitor (a news agency that covers the Middle East with a mission ‘to foster a deeper understanding between the Middle East and the international community by diving deep with analytical pieces from some of the most trusted, independent authors from across the globe’²⁶), dated October 2016, noted that ‘factions’ of the PMF [Popular Mobilisation Forces] ‘threatening to attack US troops that participate in the battle to liberate Mosul from the Islamic State (IS), but the Iraqi government hopes to smooth things over...’ The article quoted PMF leader Rayan al-Kaldani, who in September 2016 said: “The PMU [Popular Mobilisation Units] will be dealing with any illegitimate and foreign forces in Mosul the way it deals with the gangs of the Islamic State.” A former US military intelligence officer, Michael Pregent, said that most of the PMU factions fighting alongside US forces have fought against US forces in the past and that: ‘Most, if not all, PMU factions perceive the US military presence in Iraq as an occupation.’²⁷
- 3.2.6 The April 2016 Daily Caller article stated ‘Many of the Shia militants fighting in the PMUs also fought U.S. soldiers during the occupation, and they disdain anyone who collaborated with the U.S.’²⁸
- 3.2.7 In March 2020 the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) (‘a non-partisan, non-profit, public policy research organization’ which ‘advances an informed understanding of military affairs through reliable research, trusted analysis, and innovative education’²⁹) published an Iraq Situation Report for developments between 26 February and 3 March 2020. It stated:
- ‘Kata’ib Hezbollah issued a “final and irreversible” warning to groups with logistical, diplomatic, security, or economic connections to U.S. forces. KH instructed these groups to “terminate their contracts” no later than March 15. It specified that these groups include Iraqi transportation and security companies, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defense, and the Iraqi Counterterrorism Service. KH did not specify what actions it would take against organizations that continue to cooperate with the U.S. after the deadline.’³⁰

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3.3 Incidents of targeting

- 3.3.1 The article by McClatchy DC Bureau, dated March 2013, noted that people who worked with Americans are viewed as ‘enemy collaborators’ and receive ‘death threats’, even 15 months after the US withdrawal from the country. It cited Khaldoun Kubba, who worked with the US government after the invasion on projects in south Iraq: “People don’t forget what you did. Ever.”³¹ The same article noted that in 2008 ‘militants were regularly tracking and executing Iraqis who served in supporting roles.’³²

²⁶ Al-Monitor, ‘[Al-Monitor mission statement](#)’, no date

²⁷ Al-Monitor, ‘[Will PMU attack US troops in Iraq?](#)’, 3 October 2016

²⁸ The Daily Caller, ‘[Left Behind: Iraqi Interpreter Faces Death Threats...](#)’, 20 April 2016

²⁹ ISW, ‘[Who we are](#)’, no date

³⁰ ISW, ‘[Iraq Situation Report: February 26 – March 3, 2020](#)’, 6 March 2020

³¹ McClatchy DC Bureau, ‘[U.S. pledge to help Iraqis who aided...](#)’, 14 March 2013

³² McClatchy DC Bureau, ‘[U.S. pledge to help Iraqis who aided...](#)’, 14 March 2013

- 3.3.2 The Daily Caller article published in April 2016 stated: ‘While most of the U.S. military personnel who fought in those conflicts [in Afghanistan and Iraq] have now returned home, a majority of their interpreters remain in-country and their lives are in as much danger now as they were before’. It described the experience of ‘Mahbeer’, from a Shia-controlled part of eastern Baghdad, who worked as an interpreter for the US Army for five years. The article said that Mahbeer’s wife and children are also in danger. Mahbeer said: “‘We [those who worked with the US] are afraid of everything: armed militias backed by Iran on our streets, without fear of the government, on the pretext that they are protecting Iraq and at the same time they are a serial killer[s]’”. Mahbeer said his life was first threatened through an anonymous death threat letter³³.
- 3.3.3 The article continued: ‘Mahbeer said he knows many interpreters who have been harassed and killed for their work with the U.S. One example he provided was that of a young man who was killed four months ago [December 2015]. He left his house one day [sic] never to return – his body was later discovered.’ The article noted: ‘Cases like those of Mahbeer [who received death threats] are all too common.’³⁴ However, the article did not provide further specific examples.
- 3.3.4 The July 2016 Task & Purpose article described the experiences of an interpreter who worked for the US military between 2008 and 2011, who received ‘numerous’ death threats, felt unable to leave his house in Baghdad and feared terrorists and militias. The interpreter said: “‘Honestly, they hate us more than the United States Army... Multiple times they called me a traitor’”. He was sent a death threat in the post in 2010 which made him change address; although he was followed home from work in 2011, which prompted him to quit his job³⁵.
- 3.3.5 The January 2017 article published by Fortune cited Allen Vaught, a former US Army captain who worked in Fallujah, who said that 2 interpreters he worked with were executed by militia groups. It is not clear when this allegedly happened, although the article noted that Vaught went to Iraq in 2003³⁶.
- 3.3.6 The article published by Al Jazeera, dated February 2017, reported that, in December 2006 in Baghdad, ‘armed men dressed in Iraqi military uniforms’ raided the home of Farah Marcolla, killed her husband and kidnapped her father (who was later ransomed)³⁷.
- 3.3.7 Iraq specialists attending a European Asylum Support Office (EASO) meeting on Iraq in April 2017 were asked: ‘Are interpreters/drivers etc that works [sic] for the coalition still at risk of being persecuted?’ Mark Lattimer, Director of the London-based Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, responded: ‘To my knowledge, there have not been many cases recently.

³³ The Daily Caller, [‘Left Behind: Iraqi Interpreter Faces Death Threats...’](#), 20 April 2016

³⁴ The Daily Caller, [‘Left Behind: Iraqi Interpreter Faces Death Threats...’](#), 20 April 2016

³⁵ Task & Purpose, [‘This Iraqi Interpreter ... Finds Peace in Texas’](#), 14 July 2016

³⁶ Fortune, [‘Trump Refugee Order Dashes Hopes of Iraqis...’](#), 28 January 2017

³⁷ Al Jazeera, [‘What happens to Iraqis who worked with the US military?’](#), 1 February 2017

There are many US personnel still in Iraq; with most of the government; this is a less sensitive job than previously'.³⁸

- 3.3.8 Gareth Stansfield, Professor of Middle East Politics and the Al-Qasimi Chair of Arab Gulf Studies at the University of Exeter, responded to the above-mentioned question: 'Iraqis can forget quickly, but they can also remember quickly. If, for instance, the Asaib Ahl al-Haq [militia] made good on their threats to target Americans then you could see guilt by association coming back in and the re-targeted [sic] of former American associates coming back. It has changed over time, but it could change again and quickly'.³⁹

- 3.3.9 On 21 August 2020 the ISW published a Iraqi Situation Report for 12 August to 18 August 2020. The situation report stated:

'Aug. 12 – 15 [2020]: Likely Iranian Proxy Militias Target Three Iraqi Contractor Convoys Supporting the US-led Coalition with IEDs in Dhi Qar Province. Iraq's Security Media Cell (SMC), an official government reporting body, confirmed that an explosive device targeted Iraqi-operated convoys contracted by the US-led Coalition in Iraq's southern Dhi Qar Province once on August 12 and twice on August 15. The SMC stated that two of the attacks took place in the al-Batha area near Highway 8, a major Iraqi highway, in Dhi Qar. The remaining attack took place in the Um Anij area 87 km southeast of Nasiriyah. None of the attacks resulted in any casualties. Shi'a extremist Telegram channels attributed two of the attacks to Saraya Thawra al-Ashreen al-Thaniya and Usbat al-Thairen (UaT), Iranian proxy shadow militias that announced their existence only after the January 3 [2020] US killing of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps - Quds Force (IRGC-QF) Commander Qassem Soleimani. These groups are likely targeting Iraqi civilians assisting US forces to dissuade Iraqis from working with foreign forces and weaken the US and Coalition logistical support base in Iraq.

'...Aug. 14 [2020]: Likely Iranian Proxy Targets Iraqi-Operated Convoy Supporting Coalition Forces with IED near Diwaniyah, Qadisiyah Province. SMC reported that an IED struck an Iraqi contractor convoy supporting the US-led Coalition near the Diwaniyah Bridge in Qadisiyah Province. The attack caused no casualties. Iran's proxies have escalated their attacks on Iraqi-operated convoys supporting US and Coalition forces in Iraq. Likely Iranian proxies conducted 13 attacks between August 4 and August 18'⁴⁰

- 3.3.10 The same situation report additionally stated:

'Aug. 15 [2020]: Likely Iranian Proxy Claims IED Attack on Iraqi-Operated Convoy Supporting Coalition Forces in Anbar Province. Ashab al-Kahf (AK), an Iranian proxy shadow militia, claimed responsibility for a purported IED attack targeting an Iraqi-operated supply convoy supporting US forces in Anbar Province. Neither the Iraqi government nor the US-led Coalition confirmed the attack. AK circulated a video of the alleged attack that featured a speech by Lebanese Hezbollah Leader Hassan Nasrallah in the

³⁸ EASO, '[COI Meeting Report: Iraq 25-26 April 2017](#)', (p.26), July 2017

³⁹ EASO, '[COI Meeting Report: Iraq 25-26 April 2017](#)', (p.26), July 2017

⁴⁰ ISW, '[Iraq Situation Report: August 12-18, 2020](#)', 21 August 2020

background, possibly indicating ties between the Shi'a extremist organizations.'⁴¹

- 3.3.11 Another situation report published by ISW on 28 August 2020 (the latest situation report available) stated that 'Likely Iranian proxies have targeted Iraqi-contractors supporting US and Coalition forces with IEDs in at least 10 attacks in August [2020] to dissuade Iraqis from working with the United States and the US-led Coalition.'⁴²
- 3.3.12 The BBC article published in December 2020 stated:
- '...[S]ince Soleimani's assassination, several logistical convoys carrying coalition cargos in Iraq have been attacked by improvised explosive devices. 'The "ghost militias" post videos on social media after the attacks, joyously claiming responsibility for targeting a "US army convoy".
- 'In fact these convoys are run by contractors and their drivers are Iraqi - there are no US or coalition personnel accompanying them.
- '"We could see that they have started to execute their threats," Ahmed [an Iraqi interpreter] tells me.'⁴³
- 3.3.13 In June 2021 the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) ('a disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping project' which 'conducts analysis to describe, explore, and test conflict scenarios, and makes both data and analysis open for free use by the public'⁴⁴) published a regional overview of the Middle East covering events between 12 and 18 June 2021. The report stated: 'In Iraq, unidentified militants detonated a roadside IED targeting a logistical supply convoy servicing US forces on the Nassriya highway in Thi Qar. The contractor and the drivers were Iraqi. The blast, however, injured a foreigner, two Iraqis, and three members of the team protecting the convoy. Roadside attacks targeting Coalition convoys in Iraq are an almost daily occurrence, but rarely result in casualties.'⁴⁵

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⁴¹ ISW, '[Iraq Situation Report: August 12-18, 2020](#)', 21 August 2020

⁴² ISW, '[Iraq Situation Report: August 19-25, 2020](#)', 28 August 2020

⁴³ BBC, '[Iraqi interpreters 'stalked by death squads' for helping the British](#)', 30 December 2020

⁴⁴ ACLED, '[About ACLED](#)', no date

⁴⁵ ACLED, '[Regional Overview: Middle East 12-18 June 2021](#)', 23 June 2021

Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information section](#). The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised ToR, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Perceived collaborators
 - Types
 - Actors of violence
 - Incidents of targeting

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Version control

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **3.0**
- valid from **29 November 2021**

Official – sensitive: Start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: End of section

Changes from last version of this note

Updated COI and assessment.

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