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Palestinians in Iraq



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Om rapporten

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1. Summary

Palestinians in Iraq were never formally recognized as refugees. However subsequent to a number of key resolutions undertaken by the Arab League as well as the 1965 Casablanca Protocol -*Protocol for the Treatment of Palestinians in Arab States*- the group was granted a number of rights and services by the Baath regime. Although there has been no change in the entitlements granted by the previous regime the situation for the Palestinian community changed drastically in 2003 when Saddam was ousted from power. Hundreds of Palestinian were targeted by armed militias and other groups who sought revenge against the perceived preferential treatment the group received by the former regime.

The wave of sectarian violence that swept the country in 2006-2007, coupled with the attacks carried out against the Palestinian community at the time, prompted thousands of Palestinians to flee the country. Their numbers have decreased considerably since then. Reportedly, between 10 000 to 15 000 Palestinians are said to remain in Iraq today.

Although the situation of the Palestinians in Iraq has improved since 2007 many still feel insecure as a result of their experience during the sectarian violence. The deteriorating political and security situation now facing the country has also raised concerns of new provocations and reprisals amongst members of the Palestinian community. The general sentiment that the community received preferential treatment from the previous regime still prevails. As a result, Palestinians continue to face discrimination and harassment because of their nationality.

New identity cards were issued to Palestinians in 2008. Palestinians who arrived to Iraq in 1948 and their descendants are also entitled to Iraqi travel documents for Palestinians.

Palestinians wishing to leave the country are required to obtain an exit permit from the Directorate of Residency Affairs/Department of Arab Affairs (DRA/DAA) within the Ministry of Interior (MoI). The permit allows Palestinians to reside outside the country for three months. Palestinians who exceed the time limit can re-enter the country after approval from the DRA/DAA provided they have a valid Iraqi travel document or a valid Palestinian passport issued by the Palestinian Authority. Upon approval the Iraqi embassy can issue an entry visa. Palestinians who left the country illegally may also be granted re-entry by the DRA/DAA. Other than submitting a valid travel document or passport they are also requested to verify that they were formerly residing in Iraq.

2. Introduction

This report addresses the current situation of Palestinians residing in Iraq. The report further examines issues concerning documentation issued to Palestinians by the Iraqi authorities as well as entry and exit procedures pertaining to the group's right to travel from and to Iraq.

The report mainly deals with information compiled following a joint fact finding mission on November 16th to 21st 2013, to Baghdad and Erbil undertaken by the Swedish Migration Board's country of origin information unit, Lifos, and the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo, at the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration. Further information was acquired through email correspondence as well as telephone interviews conducted with officials within the Ministry of Interior (MoI).

2.1. Background

2.1.1. The number of Palestinians in Iraq

The Palestinian population in Iraq had numbered approximately 35 000 before the overthrow of the Baathist-regime in 2003.¹ Today their numbers have dwindled to about 10 000 to 15 000². UNHCR in Baghdad estimates that there are about 9000 Palestinians living in Baghdad alone³. The overall majority reside in the districts of al-Baladiyat and Zafarania. Smaller numbers are located near Mosul, approximately 1000 persons, as well as Basra, around 100 persons, and the Kurdish region which hosts a few individuals in Sulaimaniya.⁴ UNHCR recently completed a survey on the Palestinians. The survey is due to be finalised in the coming months⁵.

2.1.2 Legal Status

The Palestinians that settled in Iraq came in three successive waves. The first wave which originated from Haifa and Jaffa came to Iraq in 1948. This group fled first to Jenin following attacks carried out on their villages. In Jenin they met up with the Iraqi army that was stationed in the area at the time. Women and children were evacuated by the Iraqi army to Iraq in 1948. The men were incorporated into a special unit within the Iraqi army known as the “Carmel Brigades”. The brigade, having numbered 4000 at the time, entered Iraq in 1949 following the Iraqi army’s withdrawal from Jenin. The second wave came to Iraq after 1967 following the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The third influx of Palestinians entered Iraq in the aftermath of the Gulf War when most Palestinians were expelled from Kuwait.

According to representatives at the Palestinian Embassy in Baghdad Palestinians residing in the Iraq today are either refugees from 1948 or 1967. Palestinians who came from Kuwait following the Gulf War in 1991 have all left the country. The majority originated from Gaza and Lebanon.⁶

¹ Jadaliyya, *An ongoing Nakba; the Plight of Palestinian refugees in Iraq*, 2012-02-06, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/4264/an-ongoing-nakba_the-plight-of-palestinian-refugee, Institute for International Law and human Rights, *Iraq’s Minorities and Other Vulnerable Groups: Legal framework, Documentation and Human Rights*, May 2013, http://lawandhumanrights.org/documents/MinorityHB_EN.pdf

² UNHCR 2013-11-17, Palestinian Embassy in Baghdad 2013-11-17, The Institute for International Law and Human Rights, *Iraq’s Minorities and Other Vulnerable Groups: Legal framework, Documentation and Human Rights*, May 2013, http://lawandhumanrights.org/documents/MinorityHB_EN.pdf

³ UNHCR 2013-11-17

⁴ UNHCR, *Update of UNHCR Aide Memoire 2006 Protection Considerations for the Palestinian Refugees in Iraq*, July 2012 <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/500ebee2.pdf> Institute for International Law and human Rights, *Iraq’s Minorities and Other Vulnerable Groups: Legal framework, Documentation and Human Rights*, May 2013, http://lawandhumanrights.org/documents/MinorityHB_EN.pdf

⁵ UNHCR 2012-11-17

⁶ Palestinian Embassy in Baghdad 2013-11-17

The Palestinian refugees in Iraq were never formally recognized as refugees by the Iraqi government. However, they were given protection in accordance to key resolutions undertaken by the Arab League as well as the 1965 Casablanca Protocol, *Protocol for the Treatment of Palestinians in Arab States*⁷.

Palestinians were granted a five year residency permit as well as travel documents. However, as is the case with most Arab countries hosting Palestinian refugees, and in accordance with the Casablanca Protocol, they were not granted Iraqi citizenship and consequently did not qualify for Iraqi national passports.

Palestinians residing in Iraq do not fall under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Relief and Work Agency, UNRWA. Iraq refused to allow UNRWA the permission to operate on their territory when the organization was established in 1949⁸. Palestinians living in Iraq fall under the mandate of the UNHCR as the organization covers Palestinian refugees outside UNRWA's area of operations.⁹

UNHCR considers two groups of Palestinian refugees to fall under the scope of Article 1d of the 1951 convention:

“(i) Palestinians who are “Palestine refugees” within the sense of UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948 and other UN General Assembly Resolutions, who were displaced from that part of Palestine which became Israel, and who have been unable to return there.

(ii) Palestinians who are “displaced persons” within the sense of UN General Assembly Resolution 2252 (ES-V) of 4 June 1967 and subsequent UN General Assembly Resolutions, and who have been unable to return to the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967.”¹⁰

UNHCR also provides assistance to Palestinians who do not fall under the above mentioned criteria but who are outside the Palestinian territories and who may have a well-founded fear of persecution in accordance to the 1951 convention grounds. Such refugees can qualify as refugees under the Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention.

The Revolutionary Command Council decision of 12 September 2001, Decree 202, stipulates that Palestinians who have residency in Iraq are to be

⁷ League of Arab States, *Protocol for the Treatment of Palestinians in Arab States* (“Casablanca Protocol”), 11 September 1965, <http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=460a2b252>

⁸ Jadaliyya, *An ongoing Nakba: the Plight of Palestinian refugees in Iraq*, 2012-02-06, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/4264/an-ongoing-nakba_the-plight-of-palestinian-refugee

⁹ UNRWA, *The United Nations and Palestinian Refugees*, <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2010011791015.pdf>

¹⁰ *ibid*

‘treated as Iraqi citizens in rights and duties’, with the exception of the right to acquire Iraqi nationality¹¹, property or land¹².

Palestinians were granted a number of rights and social services in Iraq, including the right to work, as well as access to health care and education. They were also provided with government-owned housing free of charge, at the al-Balidiyat residence complex in Baghdad, or fixed subsidized rent in privately owned dwellings.

There have been no significant changes in the rights and entitlements of the Palestinian population prior to the fall of the Baath regime. With the new identity cards issued by the MoI in 2008, Palestinians continue to have access to public schools and health service as well as food rations in accordance to the food distribution system (PDS). They are also able to rent property. Palestinians are in principle allowed to seek employment within the public as well as the private sector. However, the rise in unemployment in Iraq has adversely affected the Palestinian community to an even greater extent than the rest of the Iraqi population.

2.1.3 The situation of the Palestinians in Iraq

The situation of the Palestinian community changed drastically after the fall of the Baath regime in 2003. This was mainly triggered by the public sentiment that perceived the Palestinian community as supporters to the former regime because of the benefits they received during the Saddam era. As a result, Palestinians were subjected to harassment, targeted attacks, kidnappings as well as extra-judicial killings which were predominately carried out by Shi’a militias. Hundreds of Palestinian families were also forcibly evicted from government and privately owned housing by groups of armed militia as well as landlords who had received minimal rent from the government and who no longer felt obliged to grant subsidized housing.

The impact of the sectarian violence on the Palestinian community at the time prompted thousands to flee the country. About 300 Palestinians were killed at the time¹³. The population of al-Balidiyat decreased from 8 000 to 4 000 individuals.¹⁴

¹¹ UNHCR, *Update of UNHCR Aide Memoire 2006 Protection Considerations for the Palestinian Refugees in Iraq* July 2012, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/500ebee2.pdf>

¹² Jadaliyya, *An ongoing Nakba; the Plight of Palestinian refugees in Iraq*, 2012-02-06, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/4264/an-ongoing-nakba_the-plight-of-palestinian-refugee

¹³ Palestinian Embassy in Bagdad 2013-11-17

¹⁴ UNHCR, *Update of UNHCR Aide Memoire 2006 Protection Considerations for the Palestinian Refugees in Iraq* July 2012, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/500ebee2.pdf>

According to the UNHCR some of the families who fled to Syria during the sectarian violence have opted to return to Iraq. UNHCR received 10 families from Syria¹⁵.

The al-Waleed camp on the border between Iraq and Syria hosted around 120 fleeing Iraqi Palestinians. Although the camp is formerly closed some 60 Palestinians are said to remain at the border area today¹⁶.

Although the general security situation for Palestinian refugees has improved since 2007 many Palestinians continue to feel insecure by the experience of threats and violence they endured in the aftermath of the post Saddam era. UNHCR reported in 2012 that the unstable political and security climate in the country also raises concerns of new provocations amongst members of the Palestinian community.¹⁷

UNHCR's representative in Bagdad Dr. Claire Borgeois, stated in her meeting with the delegation in November 2013 that Palestinians are not directly subjected to any imminent threats or risks which would single them out from any other minority group. However, the general sentiment that Palestinians received preferential treatment during the Saddam regime still persists.

While the legal rights outlined by the previous regime still exist, many Palestinians are finding it difficult accessing or enjoying these rights. For example, it has been reported that Palestinians working within the public as well as the private sector have had their employment terminated because they did not hold Iraqi nationality¹⁸.

The Institution for International Law and Human Rights (IILHR) states in its report *Iraq's Minorities and Other Vulnerable Groups: Legal framework, Documentation and Human Rights* that the humanitarian situation continues to be a challenge for the Palestinian community in the country. Families living in al-Baladiyah district face overcrowding. Reportedly at least 4000 persons live in the 16 apartment complex free of rent where three to four families may occupy a single apartment. Several thousand live in the surrounding area. Water, electricity and other services are limited. The situation is reported to be the same for the Palestinian population in Mosul.¹⁹

¹⁵ UNHCR 2013-11-17

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ UNHCR, *Update of UNHCR Aide Memoire 2006 Protection Considerations for the Palestinian Refugees in Iraq*, July 2012, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/500ebee2.pdf>

¹⁸ UNHCR, *Update of UNHCR Aide Memoire 2006 Protection Considerations for the Palestinian Refugees in Iraq* July 2012, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/500ebee2.pdf>
Jadaliyya, An ongoing Nakba; the Plight of Palestinian refugees in Iraq, 2012-02-06, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/4264/an-ongoing-nakba-the-plight-of-palestinian-refugee>

¹⁹ Institute for International Law and human Rights, *Iraq's Minorities and Other Vulnerable Groups: Legal framework, Documentation and Human Rights*, May 2013, http://lawandhumanrights.org/documents/MinorityHB_EN.pdf

Representatives at the Palestinian Embassy in Baghdad the delegation spoke to in November 2013 maintained that Palestinians want to leave Iraq because of the bad treatment they are receiving in the country. Many continue to face discrimination and arbitrary arrests because of their nationality and connected suspicions of terrorist activity. Those leaving the country travel to Turkey and Tunisia but have Europe and Australia as their final destination.

One embassy representative informed the delegation that although he is born in Baghdad and upholds diplomatic status he faces problems at the checkpoints because he is Palestinian. His daughter's application to study pharmacy was rejected because of her nationality. She had to accept a seat at the technical college instead.²⁰

In its Aide Memoire of July 2012 concerning the situation of Palestinian Refugees in Iraq the UNHCR reported that there has been no incidents that would suggest the Palestinians children were being denied access to education. However, there have been individual reports of harassment, negative attitudes and stereotyping undertaken by some teachers towards Palestinian children²¹.

There are currently 60 Palestinians in detention in Iraq. One of them has been sentenced to death due to terror activities.

The representatives at the Palestinian Embassy in Baghdad took up the case of a Palestinian who approached the embassy and informed that he had been arrested and tortured by the Iraqi authorities in June 2013 as a result of mistaken identity - he had the same name as a terrorist suspect. Although the authorities became aware of the mistaken identity the man was forced to pay 1000 USD for his release. A similar incident was reported involving two Palestinians who were taken by soldiers from a farm they were living at. Both were mistreated and had to pay to be released.

Another Palestinian is currently in detention suspected of terrorist activities after being arrested on the street in November 2013. The authorities have threatened to charge him with terrorist activities if he does not pay 7000 USD.²²

²⁰ Palestinian Embassy 2013-11-17

²¹ UNHCR, *Update of UNHCR Aide Memoire 2006 Protection Considerations for the Palestinian Refugees in Iraq* July 2012, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/500ebee2.pdf>

²² Palestinian Embassy 2013-11-17

2.2. Documentation

2.2.1 Identity cards

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) started to issue new identity cards for Palestinians refugees in January 2008. Identity cards issued to Palestinians vary in colour depending on the refugee group they belong to.

Palestinian refugees from 1948 are issued **red** Identity cards (that is identity cards with a red-coloured strip). Palestinians refugees who arrived to Iraq in 1967 and thereafter are issued **yellow** identity cards (that is identity cards with a yellow-coloured strip).²³

All identity cards are valid for three years. The document is issued by the Permanent Committee for Refugee Affairs (PCRA) – *al-Lajnah al-Da'ima-l 'Shoun al-Laje 'en-* within the MoI²⁴.

Each individual is issued a separate document. This is also applied for underage children.²⁵

When applying for an identity card the applicant is required to submit a certificate of residency- *ta'ed sakan*. According to an official in PCRA the certificate of residency is not to be confused with the housing card issued to Iraqis. The certificate serves as verification for the person's ongoing residency, i.e. that he/she upholds a place of residence in the country. The certificate is issued upon request by the local area representative- *Mukhtar*.

The PCRA also requires verification of status for Palestinian refugees from 1948 which it submits in a request to the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD). This procedure is specific for the refugee group from 1948 because it is the only group of Palestinians the MoMD holds records of. Once obtained, the information is forwarded in a letter to PCRA. Refugees from 1967 and other Palestinians are not required to verify their status.

A Palestinian can apply for an identity card through proxy. In case the person is outside the country the proxy is drafted by the designated Iraqi embassy or diplomatic mission abroad. The proxy can only be given to a family member. Once the proxy is obtained the PCRA will issue a new document in accordance with the prevailing procedures²⁶.

The PCRA also renews expired and lost identity cards. In the cases pertaining to loss of document the applicant is also requested to submit a statement from the police station or a judge confirming the loss of the document²⁷.

²³ PCRA, 2014-02-02, Email correspondence MoMD 2014-01-22

²⁴ PCRA, 2014-02-02

²⁵ Email correspondence UNHCR 2013-11-29

²⁶ PCRA 2014-02-02

²⁷ Email MoMD 2014-01-22, PCRA 2014-02-02.

2.2.2 Travel documents

Only Palestinian refugees adhering to the refugee group of 1948 are entitled to Iraqi travel documents, pursuant to Law No. 26 of 1961 *Travel Documents for Palestinians; and General Passport Law No.55/1959* (still in force), as well as the *Law No. 65 of 1983*. Travel documents are issued by the DRA/DAA²⁸.

Other Palestinians nationals can obtain passports issued by the Palestinian Authority²⁹.

The travel documents are valid for five years but have to be renewed every year. The renewal is registered in the document. After five years the holder is required to apply for a new document.³⁰

Palestinians wishing to apply for a travel document have to present their identity card, ration card, certificate of residency- *ta'ed sakan*, as well as a supporting letter from both the PCRA and the Palestinian Embassy³¹. The documents are then submitted with the application form.

Children under the age of 14 are included in their father's travel document. Children aged 14 and above receive separate documents.³² According to UNHCR, the authorities are considering issuing separate travel documents for all underage children³³.

Reportedly, Iraqi embassies and diplomatic missions abroad do not issue travel documents to Palestinians refugees from Iraq. Travel documents can only be obtained through the DRA/DAA³⁴.

When a Palestinian outside Iraq requests to have his/her travel document extended, renewed or updated to include additional family members the Iraqi embassy or diplomatic missions have to contact the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). The embassy is also requested to submit the following information pertaining to the document holder;

- Number of the travel document
- Date of issue
- Place of issuance
- Name of holder

²⁸ UNHCR, *Update of UNHCR Aide Memoire 2006 Protection Considerations for the Palestinian Refugees in Iraq* July 2012, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/500ebee2.pdf>,

²⁹ PCRA 2014-02-02

³⁰ DRA/DAA 2014-02-02

³¹ Email MoMD 2014-01-22, Telephone interview 2014-02-02

³² DRA/DAA, 2014-02-02

³³ Email UNHCR 2013-11-29

³⁴ Institute for International Law and human Rights, *Iraq's Minorities and Other Vulnerable Groups: Legal framework, Documentation and Human Rights*, May 2013, http://lawandhumanrights.org/documents/MinorityHB_EN.pdf

- Names of persons accompanying the document holder

The embassy is thereafter required to comply with the instructions from the MoFA's Consular Department, and the DRA/DAA³⁵.

Palestinians outside Iraq can authorize a representative, by proxy, certified by the Iraqi Embassy to apply for a travel document on their behalf. The proxy is submitted through the MoFA's Consular Department. The authorized representative can submit the application at the DRA/DAA. The representative is also required to submit a copy of the proxy as well as a copy of the applicant's travel document along with the application.³⁶

3. Resident Permits

Resident permits issued to Palestinians in Iraq are valid for one year. The permits are issued and renewed at the DRA/DAA.

All Palestinians wishing to apply for a resident permit have to verify both their identity as well as their status. Verification of identity is confirmed through submission of the identity card for Palestinians. Verification of status is done by obtaining a letter from the Palestinian Embassy in Baghdad as well as a statement from the PCRA. In addition, the applicant is also requested to submit a certificate of residency- *ta'ed sakan* -in order to confirm that he/she is residing in the country.³⁷

4. Palestinians returning to Iraq: Entry/exit procedures

All Palestinians residing in Iraq are requested to obtain approval from the MoI prior to their departure from the country³⁸. The DRA/DAA is in charge of issuing exit permits for Palestinians wishing to travel abroad. The exit permit allows Palestinian to reside outside the country for a period of three months. In some cases the applicant may have to give a reason for requesting an exit permit.³⁹

There are also cases where a person may stay longer abroad, for example for studies. A representative from the Palestinian Embassy in Baghdad the delegation spoke to mentioned that his son who is currently studying in the Ukraine receives an entry visa upon arrival each time he visits Iraq. The representative also added that his son did not face any difficulties obtaining the visa since he is born in Iraq.⁴⁰

³⁵ Institute for International Law and human Rights, *Iraq's Minorities and Other Vulnerable Groups: Legal framework, Documentation and Human Rights*, May 2013, http://lawandhumanrights.org/documents/MinorityHB_EN.pdf

³⁶ DRA/DAA, 2014-02-02

³⁷ DRA/DAA, 2014-02-02, PCRA 2014-02-02

³⁸ UNHCR, *Update of UNHCR Aide Memoire 2006 Protection Considerations for the Palestinian Refugees in Iraq*, July 2012, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/500ebee2.pdf>

³⁹ DRA/DAA 2014-02-02

⁴⁰ Palestinian Embassy, 2013-11-17

Exit permits are issued after consent from the PCRA. In order to obtain the PCRA's consent the applicant must first submit his/her identity card to the Committee. The identity card is returned upon re-entry to the country. Upon receiving the identity document the PCRA gives its consent which is drafted in a letter to the DRA/DAA instructing the designated authority to issue the permit. The permit, a blue-coloured sticker, is then added to the applicant's travel document (1948 refugee) or Palestinian passport issued by the Palestinian Authority (1967 refugees and other Palestinians).

The permit is valid for 10 days during which the applicant may leave the country. Those who do not leave the country within that period have to pay a fine and apply for a new permit. In some cases the permit is renewed without any charge. It depends on the circumstances.⁴¹

Palestinians who have exceeded their sojourn abroad have to apply for a new permit. The application can be submitted either through the Iraqi embassy or through proxy.

The DRA/DAA must first request clearance from the security department within the DRA before a new exit permit can be issued. The security department does a security check on the applicant's background. Once approved the DRA/DAA gives instructions to the designated embassy as well as all entry ports allowing the applicant to return. The Embassy also receives a copy of the approval upon which it issues an entry permit (visa) that is subsequently stamped in the applicant's travel document or Palestinian passport.⁴²

It takes about 10 days to issue an approval. The entry permit is valid for three months during which the applicant can return to Iraq. The applicant must also pay a fine, either at the Iraqi embassy or the diplomatic mission abroad issuing the visa, in this case the applicant pays 40 USD or at the port of entry upon arrival to Iraq, in which case the fine is 80 USD⁴³.

The applicant has to have a valid travel document or passport issued by the Palestinian Authority before he/she can apply for a new entry permit.

Palestinians who left Iraq illegally can also be granted an entry permit. However, they must first verify that they are registered in Iraq and that they were earlier residents in the country. This can be verified through a letter from the PCRA as well as the MoMD and also the Palestinian Embassy in Baghdad. Palestinians who are born in Iraq can also be granted re-entry if they can verify that they are born in the country. Thereafter the applications are processed in the same manner as those with expired exit permits.⁴⁴

⁴¹ DRA/DAA 2014-02-02

⁴² DRA/DAA 2014-02-02

⁴³ ibid

⁴⁴ ibid

Migration officials at Baghdad International Airport the delegation spoke to informed that they have not received any case of Palestinian returnees.⁴⁵

UNHCR has expressed concerns over the situation of Palestinian returnees to Iraq⁴⁶. In its Aide Memoire of July 2012 concerning the situation of Palestinian Refugees in Iraq the organisation stated that Palestinian returnees are more vulnerable than others. Given their diminishing numbers in the country Palestinian returnees tend to become more susceptible to threats and violence. Those who were evicted from their homes when they fled the country are also liable to become internally displaced upon return to Iraq. The deteriorating security situation is also likely to further expose the group's vulnerability.

UNHCR reiterates in its report that Palestinians returning to Baghdad after years in exile are most likely to be perceived as outsiders and therefore may be at risk of being targeted in comparison to those Palestinians who remained in Baghdad. In addition, the Palestinian community is severely weakened and marginalized and is therefore not likely to provide adequate protection and support for returnees in the current security climate in Iraq. Returnees may also find it difficult to relocate to other parts of the country as there are no alternative Palestinian communities that can host them.⁴⁷

5. Conclusion

The Palestinians population in Iraq has declined considerably following the fall of the Baath regime in 2003. The political developments and the deteriorating security situation facing the country this past decade seem to be the main contributing elements to the continuant exodus of the population.

The general security situation for Palestinians in Iraq has improved since 2007. There are no indications that would suggest that the Palestinian population is facing any direct threats that would single them out from any other minority group. However, as is the case with vulnerable groups living in Iraq today members of the Palestinian community feel marginalized by the escalating sectarian tension. The violations and attacks carried out against the population during the sectarian violence have left the Palestinian community insecure as well as susceptible to new reprisals. The fact that certain segments of Iraqi society still regard Palestinians as supporters of the Saddam era further contributes to their vulnerability.

⁴⁵ BIAP 2013-11-19

⁴⁶ UNHCR, *Update of UNHCR Aide Memoire 2006 Protection Considerations for the Palestinian Refugees in Iraq*, July 2012, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/500ebee2.pdf>

⁴⁷ UNHCR, *Update of UNHCR Aide Memoire 2006 Protection Considerations for the Palestinian Refugees in Iraq*, July 2012, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/500ebee2.pdf>

The Palestinian population's diminishing number in Iraq is also having an impact on the community's ability to provide support and protection for those left in the country, but even for those returning to Iraq after years in exile. Palestinians can formerly return to Iraq regardless of their duration abroad and irrespective of whether they left the country legally or illegally. However, there is no evidence of any Palestinians having returned through Baghdad International Airport after having their asylum application rejected abroad.

6. Consulted Sources

5.1 Oral sources

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4. Permanent Committee for Refugee Affairs, Ministry of Interior (PCRA)
5. Migration Authorities at Baghdad International Airport

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7. UNRWA, *The United Nations and Palestinian Refugees*, <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2010011791015.pdf>, [latest downloaded 2014-03-06]

7. Abbreviations

MoI Ministry of Interior

DRA/DAA Department of Residency Affairs/Department of Arab Affairs

UNRWA United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian
Refugees in the Near East

PCRA Permanent Committee for Refugee Affairs

MoMD Ministry of Migration and Displacement

MoFA Ministry of Foreign Affairs