

## Refugee Review Tribunal

### AUSTRALIA

#### RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

**Research Response Number:** IRQ31805  
**Country:** Iraq  
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This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

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#### Questions

1. Are insurgent/terrorist groups in Iraq targeting anyone who works alongside the pro-coalition forces in the rebuilding of Iraq?
2. Are they targeting Iraqi government workers who perform a co-ordinating role in this regard?
3. Do the insurgents target Shia Iraqis?
4. What is the level of instability within Dora for Kurdish Shiites?
5. Are Kurdish Shiites from Dora being forced to relocate from Dora?
6. Can Kurdish Shiites from Dora safely relocate elsewhere in Baghdad?
7. Can Kurdish Shiites safely relocate to the Kurdish areas of Iraq?
8. Are the local authorities in the Kurdish region imposing regulations to limit the influx of refugees from other parts of Iraq?
9. What has the impact of these internal refugees had on housing and rent in the Kurdish region?

#### RESPONSE

1. Are insurgent/terrorist groups in Iraq targeting anyone who works alongside the pro-coalition forces in the rebuilding of Iraq?
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The UK Home Office in its Country of Origin Information Report states that the insurgents view government workers as “collaborators” and thus legitimate targets for attack:

8.78 Those targeted also included so-called ‘soft targets’, such as civil servants and government officials, politicians, tribal and religious leaders, Kurds and Shi’as, members of ethnic or religious minorities, journalists and media workers, doctors, judges and lawyers, professors, teachers and students, police officers, artists, gold/silversmiths, jewellers, shi’a bakers, liquor sellers, music shop owners, ex-military officers, translators, contractors,

drivers, cleaners and barbers as well as those suspected of giving information to foreign governments. (BBC, 16 November 2006) [4ak] [16j] (HRW, 3 October 2005) [15j] (p52-53 and 90) (IRIN, 15 January 2006) [18ac] (AI, 15 July 2005) [28c] (p7-8) (UNAMI, 1 November-31 December 2006) [39f] (p13,15and19) (UNHCR COI, October 2005) [40c] (p15) (UNHCR guidance note, October 2005) [40a] (p13) (Associated Press, 21 May 2006) [65g]

...  
8.82 The AI report, dated 25 July 2005, however, notes that “On 26 September 2004, the IAMS [International Association of Muslim Scholars] denounced the kidnapping and killing of civilians.” [28c] (p7)

8.83 Nevertheless, armed groups also targeted alleged supporters or associates of the Iraqi Government, such as politicians and Government workers and their families, tribal or religious leaders, members of religious or ethnic minorities, journalists, doctors and lawyers as well as Iraqis working with the MNF and foreign construction companies. (UNSC, 3 March 2006) [38e] (p13) (UNHCR COI, October 2005) [40c] (p15) (UK Home Office 2007, *Country of Origin Information Report Iraq*, 30 April – Attachment 1).

It is reported that this targeting of government workers has resulted in many of them being forced to move:

8.81 Many Iraqis have been compelled to leave their posts and often the country because of threats from insurgency groups regarding their perceived or suspected co-operation with the Iraqi government, the MNF, international organisations or other ‘enemies’ of Iraq. (UNAMI, 1 May–30 June 2006) [39a] (p5) (UNHCR guidance note, October 2005) [40a] (p19) (UK Home Office 2007, *Country of Origin Information Report Iraq*, 30 April – Attachment 1).

The UNAMI (United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq) in January 2007 reported that:

**UNAMI, 16 January 2007**

“Baghdad is at the centre of the sectarian violence. Sunni and Shiite armed groups are attempting to establish territorial control of Baghdad’s many predominately mixed neighbourhoods by intimidating and killing civilian populations and forcing them into displacements to parts of the city inhabited or controlled by members of their ethnic group. Reports suggest the existence of large movements of populations primarily within the city boundaries, as the neighbourhoods become increasingly divided among Sunni and Shi’a armed groups, and are consequently grouped together based on their sect and ethnicity. This forced displacement has been achieved by means of large scale attacks targeting civilians, kidnappings, extra-judicial killings, dropping of threatening leaflets, destruction of properties, and intimidation. For instance, fighting between Sunni and Shiite armed groups were primarily recorded in December in Baghdad’s neighbourhoods of Dora, Hurriyah, Al Adhamiyah, Khadimiyah, Ghazaliyah, Amariya and Qadisiyah.” (‘Iraq: A displacement crisis’ 2007, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website, 30 March, [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/129E903BAA2C8245C12572AE002E88A/\\$file/Iraq+-March+2007.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/129E903BAA2C8245C12572AE002E88A/$file/Iraq+-March+2007.pdf) – Accessed 21 May 2007 – Attachment 2).

**4. What is the level of instability within Dora for Kurdish Shiites?**

As noted in the last paragraph, Dora is one of the main neighbourhoods where fighting takes place. The BBC reports that Doura is a predominately Sunni district and has been the site of multiple attacks:

On Saturday morning, an explosion reverberated across the Iraqi capital and a plume of black smoke rose into the sky.

The target of the attack was a police station in the mainly Sunni district of Doura in southern Baghdad.

Most of those killed were police officers. A further 26 people were injured in the blast. ('Dozens die in fresh Iraq attacks' 2007, *BBC News*, 24 March, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6490865.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6490865.stm) – Accessed 18 May 2007 – Attachment 3).

A bomb near a Sunni mosque killed 11 people outside a nearby bakery:

Tuesday's bomb was placed under a car near a mosque in the district of Doura, killing 11 bystanders standing outside a bakery, police said.

The bomb – which also injured at least four people – exploded at about 1100 GMT. ('Police find 60 bodies in Baghdad' 2006, *BBC News*, 10 October, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6037243.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6037243.stm) – Accessed 18 May 2007 – Attachment 4).

Many reports refer to just "southern Baghdad" or to Baghdad generally rather than specific districts:

### **Executions**

The 60 bodies, who were all men, were found in various parts of the city over a 24-hour period, defence and interior ministry officials said on Tuesday.

Many of them had been shot in the head at close range, execution-style.

The victims also had their hands and feet bound and showed signs of torture – hallmarks of death-squad killings, the police said. ('Police find 60 bodies in Baghdad' 2006, *BBC News*, 10 October, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6037243.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6037243.stm) – Accessed 18 May 2007 – Attachment 4).

Other attacks include mortar attacks or car bombs:

Later seven people, including women and children, died as four mortar bombs hit a south Baghdad residential district.

...

In a fourth incident, a car bomb exploded in a car parts market in south Baghdad, killing one person. ('Bomb attacks kill 16 in Baghdad' 2007, *BBC News*, 20 March, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6469673.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6469673.stm) – Accessed 18 May 2007 – Attachment 5).

## **5. Are Kurdish Shiites from Dora being forced to relocate from Dora?**

As noted in the answer to questions 1-3, Shiites generally are being forced out of Sunni areas; and perceived collaborators, regardless of where they live.

## **6. Can Kurdish Shiites from Dora safely relocate elsewhere in Baghdad?**

As noted in answer to question 4, attacks are widespread across Baghdad.

## **7. Can Kurdish Shiites safely relocate to the Kurdish areas of Iraq?**

The 3 Kurdish Governorates (not including Kirkuk or Mosul) do provide a safe haven:

More cohesive than most of the rest of Iraq, the Kurdish region has established a level of security that has made bombs and other attacks extremely rare.

Their police and army forces are based on the Peshmerga fighting units that were at the core of the long Kurdish struggle for freedom.

The resulting stability has led to something of an economic boom, with major building projects springing up in and around the main populations centres – shopping malls, housing schemes, hospitals, hotels, and an American university

...

The relative stability and security of Iraqi Kurdistan has also provided a refuge for hundreds of Iraqi Arabs – Christians, Muslims and others – seeking safety from the violence further south.

“It’s a safe area, you can relax here, and you can find everything you need, but the most important thing is security,” said Imm Yasser, a Shia mother who fled with her family to the Kurdish hill resort of Shaqlawa from the troubled, mainly Sunni suburb of Dora in southern Baghdad. (Muir, J. ‘Kurds prosper in post-Saddam era’ 2007, *BBC News*, 21 March, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6467387.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6467387.stm) – Accessed 18 May 2007 – Attachment 6).

## **8. Are the local authorities in the Kurdish region imposing regulations to limit the influx of refugees from other parts of Iraq?**

The UNHCR in its October 2005 guidelines notes that within the KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government):

6. The situation in the KRG-administered areas has not, unlike the rest of the country, changed significantly as a result of the fall of the former regime. Although the overall security conditions appear to be somewhat more stable in comparison with the rest of the country, the situation remains tense and unpredictable due to a number of factors:

- There is a high level of fear that the conflict prevailing in the other parts of the country, in particular in the Governorates of Kirkuk and Mosul, might spill over to the three Northern Governorates. Accordingly, the security measures applied within the three Northern Governorates are very strict (numerous checkpoints within the region, a high presence of security forces, limited freedom of movement). Nevertheless, security incidents such as assassinations of, and assassination attempts on, high-profile persons, in particular politicians, as well as suicide attacks by extremist groups such as Ansar Al-Sunna, do take place, even if on a lower scale than in other parts of the country. The May 2005 suicide attack on a KDP office in Erbil killing more than 60 people is a reminder of the vulnerability of the security situation in the three Northern Governorates<sup>201</sup>. (‘Guidelines Relating to the Eligibility of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers’ 2005, UNHCR Website, October <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/openssl.pdf?tbl=RSDLEGAL&id=4354e3594> – Accessed 21 May 2007 – Attachment 7).

Each Governorate has its own rules and regulations concerning entry and residence. Of particular interest in this case is a bar against those associated with the former government:

21. The Kurdish parties have introduced strict security measures at their checkpoints and will reject anybody who:

- does not originate from the respective Governorate and does not have a Kurdish sponsor to guarantee his/her entry and stay (Governorates of Erbil and Dohuk), or
- may be considered to pose a security risk (fear from terrorist attacks), or
- is found to have had links to the former government (the Ba'ath Party, the government, the security apparatus, etc.).

...

23. Every person who does not originate from the respective Governorate and is allowed to enter will have to apply for a residence permit in order to legalize his/her stay.<sup>213</sup> Applicants need to submit a petition and the necessary documentation (ID card, citizenship certificate, etc.) to the Security Department (in Sulaymaniyah Governorate) or to the Governorate Office/Department of Internal Affairs, which will then refer the request to the Security Department (Erbil and Dohuk Governorates). They will have to undergo a security screening in which their reasons for relocation will be investigated. A search will be conducted to see if they have a prior criminal record or were previously Ba'ath party members; the presence of either of these factors will lead to the denial of a residence permit and an investigation or prosecution.

24. In the Dohuk and Erbil Governorates, applicants for a residence permit need to either establish political links to the region or provide evidence they have fled a threat to their life; otherwise applications for a residence permit will be denied due to the serious lack of shelter in the Governorates. In all three Governorates, applicants must have a Kurdish sponsor residing in the respective Governorate in order to be granted a residence permit. The sponsor must have a good reputation and is required to know the applicant (for example as a family member or employer). At the recommendation of the Security Department, applicants are then granted residence permits for a six-month-long stay. Even if granted residency, new arrivals are closely watched by the security services. After expiration of the residence permit, it can be renewed for another period of six months. Non-Kurdish persons who do not have a sponsor and/or have a criminal or Ba'ath Party record are not allowed to take up residence in the three Northern Governorates. In such cases, the individuals are obliged to leave the Governorate. ('Guidelines Relating to the Eligibility of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers' 2005, UNHCR Website, October <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?tbl=RSDLEGAL&id=4354e3594> – Accessed 21 May 2007 – Attachment 7).

According to the UK Home Office, the following documents are needed:

2.23 In order to relocate, an individual must be in possession of all the following documents:

- the personal identification number which is issued by the General Directorate of Citizenship in accordance with Iraqi civil law number 65 (1972);
- the Iraqi Nationality Certificate which shows that the holder is Iraqi;
- a letter of confirmation from the place of work in the intended relocation town and/or the approval of the Mukhtar (civil administrator) of the intended relocation town;
- a declaration from the security services that the person is not involved in criminal activities.<sup>43</sup>

...

2.25 Iraqi Nationality Certificates and Iraqi Civil Status IDs are issued by:

- the Directorate of Travel and Nationality/Ministry of Interior;
- in Northern Iraq, by the Directorate of Nationality and Civil Status/Ministry of Interior in Sulaymaniyah and by the Directorate of Nationality and Civil Identification in Erbil and Dohuk.

These documents are obtained by visiting the offices as there is no reliable postal service.<sup>45</sup> (UK Home Office 2007, *Operational Guidance Note Iraq*, 12 February – Attachment 8).

## **9. What has the impact of these internal refugees had on housing and rent in the Kurdish region?**

The influx of people into “Kurdistan” is reported to have caused a shortage of housing:

Over all, displaced people “who reach the Kurdish provinces must surmount difficulties in finding housing, shelter, employment and education for their children,” the report said. That conclusion was reached based on interviews conducted by the two researchers, Kristele Younes and Nir Rosen.

Families that have moved from their original residences cannot get monthly food rations from the government, under a system started in the 1990s during the United Nations oil-for-food program. The children of displaced families often cannot enroll in schools, and few schools have classes taught in Arabic. Rents in urban areas have skyrocketed (Wong, E., ‘Thousands of Iraqis Who Flee to Kurdish Region to Escape War Face Harsh Living Conditions’ 2007, *New York Times*, 21 March <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/students/pop/articles/22iraq.html> – Accessed 23 March 2007. CISNET CX174198 – Attachment 9).

The UNHCR in January 2007 surveyed Internally Displaced Persons (IDP’s) in the three Governorates of Kurdistan, each survey returning similar results, showing a high proportion in rental houses, and concerns about the sustainability of this:

Sulaymaniyah...

“Shelter was overwhelmingly identified as the main priority need across all districts; 73-100% of families selected housing as their principal need despite IDPs immediate housing needs having been met. 90% of families live in rented housing, 6% with a host family, less than 1% in public buildings and none in tents. Families may be concerned about the sustainability of their current shelter solutions as the cause of their displacement shows little sign of abating and the length of their displacement extends. Continuing rent payments as savings are depleted and work opportunities remaining scarce is likely to be a major challenge, particularly in the face of price increases caused by the steady influx of IDPs. Those staying with host families may also be concerned about over-stay...

Dahuk...

“Shelter was identified as the top priority need in all districts with the exception of Zakho, where shelter was identified as the second priority after employment. Between 92 -96% of IDP families surveyed in Shekhan and Dahuk City, where 65-68% live in rented housing, selected shelter as their first priority. In Dahuk, the remaining 32% live with host families (23%) or in public buildings, tents, former military camps and in other shelter arrangements. In Shekhan, the remaining 35% live with host families (24%) or in collective towns, tents near host families, public buildings and in other shelter arrangements. In Amedi and Zakho, only 4-16% of families surveyed are renting houses. Those unable to rent have serious cause to feel insecure about their shelter; the emphasis on shelter reflects concerns about their ongoing ability to maintain payment and secure their own shelter as the length of their displacement extends. Most families are having difficulties finding jobs and are therefore living off savings. As the influx of IDPs continues, rental rates have risen sharply, and high rents underlie many IDPs’ housing concerns. Together with their lack of regular income, rental market pressure means that families will find it difficult to continue to afford housing as the length of their displacement extends...

Erbil...

“Shelter was overwhelmingly identified as a priority need across all sub-districts, ranging from 59-94%. Overall, 83% of IDP families surveyed rated shelter as their principal need despite the apparent absence of a housing crisis of the surveyed IDP population. 74% of families live in rented housing, 14% (other) live in private homes or hotels, 9% with a host family and 3% in tents near a host family home (mainly in Khabat). Families may be concerned about the sustainability of their current shelter solutions as the cause of their displacement shows little sign of abating and the length of their displacement extends. Continuing rent payments as savings are depleted and work opportunities remain scarce is likely to be a major challenge, particularly in the face of price increases caused by the steady influx of IDPs. Those staying with host families may also be concerned about over-stay. After shelter, the next priority needs were work, health and food.” (‘Iraq: A displacement crisis’ 2007, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website, 30 March, [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/129E903BAA2C8245C12572AE002EE88A/\\$file/Iraq+-March+2007.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/129E903BAA2C8245C12572AE002EE88A/$file/Iraq+-March+2007.pdf) – Accessed 21 May 2007 – Attachment 2).

## List of Sources Consulted

### Internet Sources:

#### **Government Information & Reports**

UK Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

#### **United Nations (UN)**

United Nations <http://www.un.org/>

UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.ch/>

#### **International News & Politics**

*BBC News* <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

#### **Search Engines**

Google <http://www.google.com.au/>

Copernic <http://www.copernic.com/>

### Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

CISNET (Department of Immigration Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

## List of Attachments

1. UK Home Office 2007, *Country of Origin Information Report Iraq*, 30 April.
2. ‘Iraq: A displacement crisis’ 2007, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website, 30 March, [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/129E903BAA2C8245C12572AE002EE88A/\\$file/Iraq+-March+2007.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/129E903BAA2C8245C12572AE002EE88A/$file/Iraq+-March+2007.pdf) – Accessed 21 May 2007.
3. ‘Dozens die in fresh Iraq attacks’ 2007, *BBC News*, 24 March, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6490865.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6490865.stm) – Accessed 18 May 2007.
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5. 'Bomb attacks kill 16 in Baghdad' 2007, *BBC News*, 20 March, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6469673.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6469673.stm) – Accessed 18 May 2007.
6. Muir, J. 'Kurds prosper in post-Saddam era' 2007, *BBC News*, 21 March, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6467387.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6467387.stm) – Accessed 18 May 2007.
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