

# ENTRY CLEARANCE BULLETIN



## IRAQ

1. This Bulletin has been produced by the Country Specific Asylum Policy Team, Border and Immigration Agency, Home Office to provide guidance on entry clearance facilities for Iraqi nationals to decision makers dealing with Iraqi asylum and human rights claims.

### Background

2. Iraqi nationals in the UK who are seeking to make an application for leave to remain in the UK under the Immigration Rules or outside the Rules are generally required to return to Iraq and apply for entry clearance at the designated visa issuing post in Amman, Jordan. However, recent country reports indicate this is not always possible for certain categories of individuals, namely young Iraqi males, who in some instances have been refused entry to Jordan by officials at the border.

### Country Information

3. Jordan has opened its doors to hundreds of thousands of Iraqis on the move and the United Nations Refugee Agency estimates that there are up to 700,000 Iraqi refugees in the country<sup>1</sup>. However according to recent reports some Iraqis are now being refused entry to Jordan, which has closed its border to Iraqi men between certain ages. Some sources say that the age is between 17 to 35<sup>2</sup> others say 20 to 40.<sup>3</sup>
4. Reports suggest that Iraqi nationals seeking entry to Jordan must prove that they have sufficient funds to support themselves while staying in the kingdom and, most importantly, must hold a new G series passport.<sup>4</sup> They also indicate that Iraqis already in Jordan are finding it increasingly difficult to renew their visas to remain in country.<sup>5</sup>
5. There are no official figures on the number of Iraqis who have been denied entry to Jordan, but a Jordanian interior ministry official who spoke on condition of anonymity said more than half of those who attempted to enter had been denied.<sup>6</sup>
6. Egypt has also tightened its requirements for Iraqis seeking entry to its territory and in early January 2007, the Egyptian authorities began imposing highly restrictive new procedures for Iraqis seeking entry. There is no Egyptian diplomatic mission in Baghdad, and the Egyptian authorities require face to face interviews by at least one family member at consulates in Damascus or Amman. It is reported that the number of applicants are dropping because the Iraqis cannot get to Jordan or Syria.<sup>7</sup> In addition, other countries which share borders with Iraq such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Turkey and Iran have allowed very few Iraqis in.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Inter Press Service, (via Dahr Jamail's MidEast Dispatches), Jordan Becomes a Doubtful Refuge, 29 January 2007

<sup>2</sup> HRW, US, Jordan, Syria Must Open Doors to Iraq Refugees, 16 January 2007

<sup>3</sup> IRIN, (via Reuters), New rules a 'death sentence' for Iraqis, 1 March 2007

<sup>4</sup> IRIN, (via Reuters), New rules a 'death sentence' for Iraqis, 1 March 2007

<sup>5</sup> Refugees International, The World's Fastest Growing Refugee Crisis, 22 March 2007

<sup>6</sup> IRIN, (via Reuters), New rules a 'death sentence' for Iraqis, 1 March 2007

<sup>7</sup> Human Rights Watch Iraq Neighbours stem flow of Iraqis fleeing war, 17 April 2007

<sup>8</sup> Inter Press Service, (via Dahr Jamail's MidEast Dispatches), Jordan Becomes a Doubtful Refuge, 29 January 2007

7. However, despite claims that Syria has begun “imposing restrictions on Iraqi refugees”, such as shutting out Palestinians trying to flee Iraq,<sup>9</sup> Syria has generally maintained its ‘open door policy’ to Iraqis. Although there have been reports that Shia Muslims from Iraq wanting to cross the border to Syria are unable to travel to or through Anbar, which means the land routes to Jordan and Syria are forbidden to them, there are reported to be informal transfer points in the western sections of Baghdad where people can change vehicles in order to proceed through Anbar.<sup>10</sup>
8. Lebanon has closed its borders to Iraqis entirely.<sup>11</sup> According to the UN an estimated 20,000 to 40,000 Iraqis were living in Lebanon in 2006. It is reported that Lebanon regularly deported Iraqis who may well have had valid persecution claims.<sup>12</sup>
9. Lebanon requires advance visas for all Iraqis arriving overland, but will issue a tourist visa for Iraqis arriving with valid passports at the Rafic Hariri International Airport if they are holding \$2,000 cash, a hotel booking, and a return ticket.<sup>13</sup>

## **Conclusion**

10. Country information suggests that further restrictions have been applied to Iraqi nationals attempting to gain access to Jordan. In these circumstances there may be instances where it is arguably unreasonable to expect an Iraqi national to return to Iraq to make an entry clearance application in Jordan. This would apply particularly to single males between ages 18 and 45. Syria, Damascus is currently operating a very limited programme of entry clearance, which amounts to accepting approx 20 applications in total per week. In this instance Beirut, Lebanon has also been designated for Iraqi entry clearance. However recent reports suggest that access to Lebanon has been severely restricted to Iraqi nationals and in some instances has been denied entirely. Iraqi nationals also require a visa to enter Lebanon. These are issued either at the airport or from the Lebanese embassy in Baghdad.
11. If it is established that an applicant would be unable to gain access to Jordan, for the reason outlined above, and cannot gain access to Lebanon it would be considered unreasonable to argue entry clearance facilities are available for that applicant. However each case must be considered on its individual merits. If it is considered that gaining access to entry clearance facilities is not possible this would not necessarily mean that interference could be said to be disproportionate. However, caseworkers will need to consider each case on its merits and, if relevant, explain why interference would not be disproportionate. For further guidance on article 8 please see the Asylum Instruction via:  
[http://horizon/ind/manuals/asylum/resources/Asylum\\_Processes\\_&\\_Guidance/Considering\\_and\\_Deciding\\_the\\_Claim/Related\\_Policy/Article\\_8\\_of\\_the\\_ECHR.doc](http://horizon/ind/manuals/asylum/resources/Asylum_Processes_&_Guidance/Considering_and_Deciding_the_Claim/Related_Policy/Article_8_of_the_ECHR.doc)
12. We will continue to remain in close contact with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and UK Visas and will keep this entry clearance policy under review.
13. **Source Documents**
  - **Human Rights Watch**, US, Jordan, Syria Must Open Doors to Iraq Refugees, 16 January 2007 <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/01/16/usint15064.htm>
  - **Inter Press Service**, (via Dahr Jamail's MidEast Dispatches), Jordan Becomes a Doubtful Refuge, 29 January 2007 [http://www.dahrjamailiraq.com/hard\\_news/archives/iraq/000533.php](http://www.dahrjamailiraq.com/hard_news/archives/iraq/000533.php)

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<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Watch Iraq Neighbours stem flow of Iraqis fleeing war, 17 April 2007

<sup>10</sup> Brookings Institution, (via ReliefWeb), Sectarian Violence: Radical Groups Drive Internal Displacement in Iraq, October 2006, (joint project with the University of Bern)

<sup>11</sup> Refugee International, Iraqi Refugee Crisis: International Response Urgently Needed, 5 December 2006

<sup>12</sup> USSD Lebanon 6 March 2007

<sup>13</sup> Human Rights Watch: “The Silent Treatment” – Fleeing Iraq, Surviving in Jordan’, November 2006

- **IRIN**, (via Reuters), New rules a 'death sentence' for Iraqis, 1 March 2007  
<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/IRIN/8ebf4f902d4d3593f9810fdbb752759e.htm>
- **Refugees International**, The World's Fastest Growing Refugee Crisis, 22 March 2007  
<http://www.refugeesinternational.org/content/article/detail/9679>
- **Brookings Institution**, (via ReliefWeb), Sectarian Violence: Radical Groups Drive Internal Displacement in Iraq, October 2006, (joint project with the University of Bern)  
<http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2006/bi-irq-18oct.pdf>
- **Human Rights Watch** Iraq Neighbours stem flow of Iraqis fleeing war, 17 April 2007  
<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/04/17/iraq15720.htm>
- **Refugee International**, Iraqi Refugee Crisis: International Response Urgently Needed, 5 December 2006  
<http://www.refugeesinternational.org/content/article/detail/9688?PHPSESSID=5cfliegen3C>
- **US Department of State**, Country Report on Human Rights Practices Lebanon, 6 March 2007  
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78857.htm>
- **Human Rights Watch** The Silent Treatment – Fleeing Iraq, Surviving in Jordan, November 2006  
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2006/jordan1106/index.htm>

**Asylum Policy**  
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