



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Iraq

Iraq – IRQ39888 – Update on IRQ38510 –
Treatment of communists

14 February 2012

1. Please provide an update on *Country Advice IRQ38510* of April 2011.

Are communists targeted by Shi'ite fundamentalist militias, including the Al Mahdi Army, in Iraq?

No additional information was located to indicate that communists are – or have been – specifically targeted by Shi'ite fundamentalist militias.

Please refer to the response for [Question 2](#) for further information regarding the situation for communists in Iraq.

Are secular Shi'ites targeted by Shi'ite fundamentalist militias?

No additional updated information was located indicating that secular Shi'ites are targeted by Shi'ite fundamentalist militias.

How are secular Shi'ites identified in Iraq?

No additional updated information was located regarding the identification of Shi'ites in Iraq.

Is the state able to protect those ordinary citizens imputed as being Government supporters from attacks by Shi'ite fundamentalist militias?

No specific information was located regarding the availability of protection for ordinary citizens imputed as being government supporters from attacks by Shi'ite fundamentalist militias. Recent general information on the availability of state protection in Iraq follows.

According to the most recent Human Rights Watch annual report in 2012, “[a]ttacks by armed groups killed hundreds of civilians and security forces. Assailants targeted provincial councils and government officials, checkpoints, markets and mosques”. In August 2011, more than 40 coordinated attacks in 17 cities resulted in the deaths of more than 90 people.¹

A similar sentiment was expressed by Amnesty International (AI), who noted that “[a]rmed groups opposed to the government and the presence of US forces committed gross human rights abuses, including kidnapping, torture and murder. They carried out suicide bombings in public places and other large-scale indiscriminate attacks against civilians, and assassinated individuals”. AI further noted that “Shi'a militia, in particular members of ‘Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (the League of the Righteous), a Mahdi Army splinter group, also committed gross human rights abuses, including kidnapping and murder”.²

¹ Human Rights Watch 2012, *World Report – Events of 2011*, 22 January, p.565

² Amnesty International 2011, *Annual Report – Iraq*, 13 May

In August 2011, the US Department of State (USDOS) *Country Reports on Terrorism for 2010* noted that “[t]errorist attacks primarily targeted Iraqi and U.S. security forces and government officials, but they were also aimed at stirring ethnic tensions among Iraqi sectarian groups and minorities”. The report cited a number of terrorist incidents against a range of targets throughout Iraq, including suicide bombings against government buildings, hotels, embassies, businesses and security forces, hit-and-run shootings, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and vehicle borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs). Religious and sectarian groups were also targeted.³

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) Iraq Guidance Note from September 2011 quoted the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who in March 2011 reported that in spite of Iraqi government efforts to promote the rule of law and ensure security for its citizens, the absence of adherence to the rule of law remained an obstacle to a functioning human rights culture in Iraq.⁴

Are people who refuse to cooperate with Shi’ite militias the subject of targeted attacks?

No additional updated information was located indicating that people who refuse to cooperate with Shi’ite militias are the subject of targeted attacks.

Are returnees from Coalition of the Willing countries like Australia targeted by Islamists?

No additional updated information was located indicating that returnees from western countries are specifically targeted by Islamists.

2. Please provide country information on the treatment in Iraq of members of the Communist Party.

Limited additional updated information was located regarding the treatment in Iraq of members of the Communist Party.

A December 2011 report by *Al-Akhbar* questioned the Iraqi Communist Party’s relevance in the current political climate, noting that despite it being “one of the country’s oldest and historically most important secular parties – its current leadership has reduced it to little more than a sidekick and cheerleader for the Kurdish nationalist parties”.⁵ This followed an earlier *Al-Akhbar* report from November 2011, which reported that “Iraq’s disgraced Communist Party is trying to revive its fortunes by creating a new political formation”.⁶

In October 2011, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* reported that a new secular political bloc – the Alliance of Democratic Powers – had been formed, and was to be “composed of Iraq’s Communist Party, the National Democratic Party, some civil organizations, and several independent politicians”. It was anticipated that the new bloc would be “an active political entity in the next round of local elections to be held in Iraq”. Neither the Communist nor the

³ US Department of State 2011, *Country Reports on Terrorism for 2010*, 18 August, pp.83-85

⁴ Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2011, *Country Guidance Note – Iraq*, 5 September, p.34

⁵ ‘Iraq After the Withdrawal II: The Specter of Sects’ 2011, Open Source Centre, source: *Al-Akhbar English*, 22 December

https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_200_203_121123_43/content/Display/GMP20111222966160#index=1&searchKey=7411188&rpp=10 – Accessed 3 February 2012

⁶ ‘After Backing Occupation, Iraqi Leftists Try Recasting Their Fortune’ 2011, Open Source Centre, source: *Al-Akhbar English*, 25 November

https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_200_203_121123_43/content/Display/GMP2011125966179#index=6&searchKey=7411188&rpp=10 – Accessed 3 February 2012

National Democratic parties were reportedly successful in the previous elections, with neither able to meet the threshold required to enter parliament.⁷

Members of the Communist Party were able to demonstrate freely in Baghdad in May 2011, without attracting any apparent reprisal from either the Iraqi government or from extremist groups. According to *AK News*, on 1 May 2011 “[h]undreds of supporters of the Communist Party demonstrated in Firdous Square at the center of the Iraqi capital...to mark international labor day. They demanded the repeal of Law 150 of 1987, and denounced the capitalist system, which they described as fundamentally unjust”. According to the report, Resolution 150 – which remains on the statute books despite the demise of the former regime – reportedly “disbanded the General Federation of Workers Union in Iraq and curtailed workers rights”. Most of the protestors reportedly wore red hats to demonstrate their support for the Communist Party.⁸

According to *Answat al-Iraq* – who reported on the same demonstration – “[t]he majority of demonstrators belong to the Iraqi Communist Party, as well as workers of the public sector and representatives of the private sector, who demanded the legislation of new labor laws that open employment chances for unemployed workers”. A statement issued by the demonstrators demanded “the freedom of strikes, demonstration, organization, abolishment of self-financing, achievement of work or guarantees against unemployment, release of all detainees, especially those detained in demonstrations and trial of all criminals who opened fire on the demonstrators”.⁹

⁷ ‘Iraqi Parties Establish Secular Political Bloc’ 2011, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 13 October http://www.rferl.org/content/iraqi_parties_establish_secular_bloc/24358299.html – Accessed 27 October 2011

⁸ ‘Communists mark labor day with protests against anti-union law’ 2011, *AK News*, 1 May https://www.zawya.com/story.cfm/sidZAWYA20110502061345/Iraq_Communists_mark_labor_day_with_protests_against_antiunion_law – Accessed 13 May 2011

⁹ ‘Iraqi Communist Party leads demo in central Baghdad on International Labor Day’ 2011, *Answat al-Iraq*, 1 May http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=142290&l=1 – Accessed 2 May 2011

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Amnesty International 2011, *Annual Report – Iraq*, 13 May.

Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2011, *Country Guidance Note – Iraq*, 5 September.

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