stillhumanstillhere
The campaign to end destitution of refused asylum seekers

16 June 2015 (COI included up to 12 May 2015)

A Commentary on the December 2014 and April 2015 Country Information and Guidance reports issued on Iraq

This commentary identifies what the 'Still Human Still Here' coalition considers to be the main inconsistencies and omissions between the currently available country of origin information (COI) and case law on Iraq and the conclusions reached in the following Country Information and Guidance (CIG) reports issued by the UK Home Office:

- o Internal relocation (and technical obstacles), December 2014
- o Security situation in Baghdad, southern governorates and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), April 2015

Where we believe inconsistencies have been identified, the relevant section of the CIG report is highlighted in blue. An index of full sources of the COI referred to in this commentary is also provided at the end of the document (COI up to 12 May 2015). This commentary is a guide for legal practitioners and decision-makers in respect of the relevant COI, by reference to the sections of the CIG on 'Iraq: Internal relocation (and technical obstacles) issued in December 2014 (from now on referred to as 'CIG on internal relocation') and on 'Iraq: Security situation in Baghdad, southern governorates and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)' issued in April 2015 (from now on referred to as 'CIG on security situation').

The document should be used as a tool to help to identify relevant COI and the COI referred to can be considered by decision makers in assessing asylum applications and appeals. This document should not be submitted as evidence to the UK Home Office, the Tribunal or other decision makers in asylum applications or appeals. However, legal representatives are welcome to submit the COI referred to in this document to decision makers (including judges) to help in the accurate determination of an asylum claim or appeal.

The COI referred to in this document is not exhaustive and should always be complemented by case-specific COI research.

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1.1 Basis of claim […]
1.1.4 The GoI and KRG forces, supported by the US-coalition forces, are contesting areas occupied by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and have regained control of a number of towns / areas in the governorates of Anbar, Salah Addin, Diyala, At Ta'min (Kirkuk) and Ninewa over the course of 2014 and early 2015. However the security situation and areas of control remain fluid and decision makers should consider the latest available country information in determining which areas are under the control of or being contested by the GoI and allied forces.
See country information for sources providing information on which areas are controlled by the GoI and ISIL, and Country Information and Guidance: Iraq: The security situation in the 'contested' areas of Iraq, August 2014 […]
Is there indiscriminate violence in areas under the control of the Iraq government, including areas under the Kurdish regional government, which is at such a level that substantial grounds exist for believing that the person, solely by being present there, faces a real risk of harm which threatens their life or person?
[…] Baghdad governorate […]
1.3.21 The security situation remains fluid and decision makers must take into account the person's individual circumstances and the latest country information on the levels and nature of violence in assessing if a person is at risk of serious harm.
See Country information, Baghdad […]
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1.3.27 The security situation remains fluid and decision makers must take into account the person's individual circumstances and the latest country information on the levels and nature of violence in assessing if a person is at risk of harm.
See: Country information, Babil […]
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1.3.31 The security situation remains fluid and decision makers will need to take account the person's individual circumstances and the latest country information in assessing if a person is at risk of harm.
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1.3.40 However, the security situation remains fluid and decision makers should take into account up-to-date country information in assessing risks faced by persons […]

The guidance provided in the 'CIG on security situation' at paragraphs 1.1.4, 1.3.21, 1.3.27, 2.3.31 and 1.3.40 (highlighted in blue above) direct decision makers to consult the latest country information before making an assessment to determine which areas are under government control and/or contested, as well as the levels and nature of violence in these areas. Section 2 of the CIG references a range of sources to consult:

- Fund for Peace – Fragile States Index 2014
- Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research – Conflict Barometer 2013[1]
- Institute for the Study of War
- International Organisation for Migration (IOM) – Iraq: Displacement Tracking Matrix
- IOM – Iraq: Governorate profiles
- Iraq Body Count
- Musings on Iraq
- U.S. Congressional Research Service
- UK Foreign & Commonwealth – Human Rights and Democracy Report 2014/2015

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[1] The latest 'Conflict Barometer' covering 2014 was published in March 2015. See Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, *Conflict Barometer 2014*, latest version published 3 April 2015 [previously published on 18th March 2015].

- o [UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)](#)
- o [UN Joint Analysis Unit – Iraq Governorate profiles](#)
- o [UNHCR](#)

Given the fast-changing security situation in Iraq it is imperative to conduct up-to-date COI research addressing the security situation and the threat of indiscriminate violence in the proposed site of return or internal relocation, including the reach of non-state armed groups. A database of additional useful sources to consult on the security situation in Iraq to assist in case specific research (for example on a particular location or a specific non-state armed group) has been included in the Appendix '*Useful sources to consult on the security situation in Iraq*'.

It is also imperative that UNHCR's latest 'Position on Returns to Iraq' (published October 2014) be consulted, which currently finds it inappropriate for "States to deny persons from Iraq international protection on the basis of the applicability of an internal flight or relocation alternative" (emphasis added):

➢ [UNHCR, UNHCR Position on Returns to Iraq, October 2014](#)
[…] UNHCR Position on Returns
27. As the situation in Iraq remains highly fluid and volatile, and since all parts of the country are reported to have been affected, directly or indirectly, by the ongoing crisis, UNHCR urges States not to forcibly return persons originating from Iraq until tangible improvements in the security and human rights situation have occurred. In the current circumstances, many persons fleeing Iraq are likely to meet the 1951 Convention criteria for refugee status. When, in the context of the adjudication of an individual case of a person originating from Iraq, 1951 Convention criteria are found not to apply, broader refugee criteria as contained in relevant regional instruments or complementary forms of protection are likely to apply. In the current circumstances, with massive new internal displacement coupled with a large-scale humanitarian crisis, mounting sectarian tensions and reported access restrictions, particularly into the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, **UNHCR does in principle not consider it appropriate for States to deny persons from Iraq international protection on the basis of the applicability of an internal flight or relocation alternative**. […]

➢ *Caution using figures, esp. fatality figures*

Excerpt from Iraq 'CIG on security situation'
[…] Section 2: Information
2.1 Overview […]
2.1.5 The UNAMI Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September– 10 December 2014, observing the situation in the country as a whole stated:
'Six months since the so called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) seized the city of Mosul and instigated the current crisis, the acts of terrorism and the ongoing armed conflict between the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and affiliated forces, on the one hand, and ISIL and associated armed groups on the other, continue to take a heavy toll on civilians. The conflict continues to be characterized by widespread acts of violence and gross violations and abuses of human rights of an increasingly sectarian nature. In large areas of the country, violence has led to a deterioration of the rule of law and impunity for those perpetrating violations and abuses… Owing to increasing limitations on UNAMI/OHCHR capacity to verify reports of civilian casualties, the figures cited should be regarded as absolute minimums. The actual number of civilian victims of the violence could be much higher. The number of civilians who have died from the secondary effects of violence, such as lack of access to basic food, water or medicine, after fleeing their homes or who remained trapped in areas under ISIL control or in areas of conflict, remains unknown. Children, pregnant women, persons with disabilities and elderly people have been particularly vulnerable.
'As of 10 December 2014, it was estimated that more than two million persons have been displaced within Iraq, comprising some 334,011 families. Over 945,000 individuals are displaced in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), while over 900,000 were spread throughout other governorates, including Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din, with smaller numbers in Karbala, Babil, Najaf,

Muthanna, Thi-Qar and Basra. Areas under the control of ISIL and associated armed groups or in areas characterized by violence remain difficult to access for the provision of humanitarian assistance. Large numbers of civilians remained trapped or displaced in areas under the control of ISIL and their security and access to humanitarian assistance remained of primary concern. With the onset of winter, it has become even more critical to ensure that the basic humanitarian needs of all those displaced or affected by the violence are met.

'UNAMI/OHCHR continued to receive reports of serious violations of international humanitarian law and gross human rights violations and abuses perpetrated by ISIL, with an apparent systematic and widespread character. These include attacks directly targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, executions and other targeted killings of civilians, abductions, rape and other forms of sexual and gender based violence perpetrated against women and children, slavery and trafficking of women and children, forced recruitment of children, destruction or desecration of places of religious or cultural significance, wanton destruction and looting of property, and denial of fundamental freedoms.' […]

2.3.5 Musings on Iraq considering the security situation in Iraq in 2014 observed: 'The center of the country witnessed the most violence as usual…. Salahaddin had the highest number of attacks with 2,288, almost matched by Baghdad's 2,278. After that Anbar had 1,912, Ninewa 1,390, Diyala 919, Babil 624, Kirkuk 573, Basra 119, Karbala 28, Wasit 26, Qadisiyah 24, Maysan 13, Dhi Qar 7, Najaf 5, Muthanna 2, and Irbil 1. Salahaddin was the base for several insurgent groups such as the Baathist Naqshibandi and the Islamic State. They were carrying out a concerted effort to undermine the security forces there at the start of the year, and then became one of the main battlefronts in Iraq after the summer. Baghdad has always been a favorite target of insurgents who were attempting to stoke sectarian tensions, and undermine the government. Anbar was where open fighting started at the very end of 2013. Ninewa was very similar to Salahaddin where insurgents focused upon Mosul and the surrounding areas going after the security forces, government officials, and the tribes to prepare for the summer. Diyala, Babil and Kirkuk had longtime militant bases in places like the Hamrin Mountains, Jurf al-Sakhr and Hawija, which were used to launch operations into the surrounding areas. Basra surprisingly had the sixth most attacks. IS launched some car bombs into the province, but there was a lot of other violent activities there likely done by gangs and militias. The rest of the south saw sporadic attacks, but were largely saved from the chaos going on in the rest of Iraq.

'Musings On Iraq recorded 24,725 killed and 37,970 wounded. That was by far the highest amount for any organization tracking violence in Iraq. Iraq Body Count's year end figure was 17,073. That included civilians, police, sahwa, and militiamen, but not the army or peshmerga. The United Nations had 12,282 deaths and 23,126 injured, while the Iraqi government reported, 15,538 fatalities and more than 22,000 wounded. Musings On Iraq uses Iraqi and international press reports, and is no way comprehensive. There are plenty of incidents that do not get covered. The Iraqi and Kurdish government also stopped reporting on Iraqi Security Force (ISF) and peshmerga losses when the summer offensive stared. Towards the end of the year however, the Peshmerga Ministry did release some figures on its casualties from after June.

'The number of deaths by province largely followed the number of attacks in each… Salahaddin had 5,725 fatalities, Baghdad 5,160, Anbar 4,881, Diyala 2,130, Babil 1,507, 874 in Kirkuk, 200 in Karbala, 128 in Basra, 42 in Wasit, 18 in Najaf, 15 in Maysan, 10 in Irbil and Qadisiyah each, 8 in Muthanna, and 6 in Dhi Qar.

'June was the deadliest month with 4,172. Deaths remained high for the following four months with an average of 2,414 deaths each. Then the figures dropped with 1,831 in November and 1,774 in December the lowest amount of the year.

'Civilians were the main casualties in Iraq… 17,098 died during the year, with another 26,590 wounded. The army and police had 6,152 deaths and 6,757 injured, the peshmerga 895 killed and 4,034 wounded, the Asayesh, 8 dead and 13 wounded, and the sahwa 570 killed and 576 injured. Again, these figures show the lack of reporting by government agencies for losses amongst the security forces. The difference between the number of peshmerga dead and wounded was more than four fold. Conversely, the numbers for the ISF's fatalities and injured were almost the same. Usually there are twice or more injured as killed in wars pointing to a lack of information being shared by the authorities… Vehicle borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) have been a major tool of the Islamic State and mark its rise and fall during the year. From January to May there were 91.6 car bombs per month. This was a sign that IS was preparing for its summer offensive. Surprisingly this type of attack declined in the following months with an average of 53.1 from June to December. In fact, by the end of the year, it appeared that IS's networks were thoroughly disrupted as there were only 21 VBIEDs in December, the fewest since 2012 with only one car

bomb wave lasting three days from December 9-11. A further sign that IS had lost its capabilities was the fact that southern Iraq, which had been a favorite target to stir sectarian divisions, was not attacked at all during November and December. Instead VBIEDs were increasingly used in military operations in Anbar and Salahaddin against the ISF.' […]

As highlighted in paragraphs 2.1.5 and 2.3.5, when consulting and referring to figures provided in research reports, especially fatality figures, it is imperative to remember that figures are "absolute minimums" [UNAMI figures], "in no way comprehensive" [Musings on Iraq figures] and that there may be "plenty of incidents that do not get covered [Musings on Iraq figures]".

2. Risk profiles in Baghdad and southern Iraq

Excerpt from Iraq 'CIG on security situation'
Section 1: Guidance
1.3 Consideration of Issues […]
1.3.8 Decision makers should also consider if a person's individual circumstances expose them to an increased risk of indiscriminate violence. In the ECJ case of Elgafaji the Court held that 'the more the [person] is able to show that [they are] specifically affected by Page 6 of 50 reason of factors particular to [their] personal circumstances, the lower the level of indiscriminate violence required for [them] to be eligible for subsidiary protection'. (paragraph 39)
See also Asylum Instructions on Assessing credibility and refugee status and, for information on the interpretation of Article 15(c) of the QD, Humanitarian protection […]
Is there indiscriminate violence in areas under the control of the Iraq government, including areas under the Kurdish regional government, which is at such a level that substantial grounds exist for believing that the person, solely by being present there, faces a real risk of harm which threatens their life or person?
[…] Baghdad governorate […]
1.3.20 While in general a return to Baghdad governorate would not breach Article 15(c), decision makers must consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the person's individual circumstances which might nevertheless place them at risk. Such factors include – but are not limited to - the person's age, gender, health, ethnicity, religious sect, disability, and profession. Some persons, especially those who reside in areas where they are a minority, may face a heightened risk of indiscriminate violence. Decision makers must consider carefully whether the existence of such factors means that the harm they fear is not in fact indiscriminate, but targeted, if not at them personally, for Refugee Convention reasons. […]
Babil governorate […]
1.3.26 While in general a return to Babil would not breach Article 15(c), decision makers must also consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the person's individual circumstances which might nevertheless place them at risk. Such factors include – but are not limited to - the person's age, gender, health, ethnicity, religious, sect, disability and profession. Some persons, especially those who reside in areas where they are a minority, may face a heightened risk of indiscriminate violence. Decision makers must consider carefully whether the existence of such factors means that the harm that a person fears is not in fact indiscriminate, but targeted, if not at them personally, for Refugee Convention reasons. […]
Southern governorates […]
1.3.30 While in general a return to the southern governorates would not breach Article 15c, decision makers must consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the person's individual circumstances which might nevertheless place them at risk. Such factors might include – but not limited to - the person's age, gender, health, ethnicity, religious sect, disability, and profession. Some persons, especially those who reside in areas where they are a minority, may face a heightened risk of indiscriminate violence. Decision makers must also consider carefully whether the existence of such factors means that the harm that a person fears is not in fact indiscriminate, but targeted, if not at them personally, for Refugee Convention reasons. […]

Whilst the guidance provided in the 'CIG on security situation' emphasises at paragraphs 1.3.8, 1.3.20, 1.3.26, and 1.3.30 that decision makers need to factor in a person's individual circumstances when assessing whether it exposes them to an increased risk of indiscriminate violence, it does not specify the profiles of those at risk of being targeted despite including COI in 'Section 2: Information' that highlights targeted attacks in the Southern governorates in particular against:

- o Sunnis (paragraphs, 2.1.8, 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.6.27 - 2.6.30, 2.6.51)
- o Members of political parties (paragraph 2.6.47), religious and tribal figures (paragraphs 2.2.3, 2.6.47)
- o Government employees (paragraphs 2.1.8, 2.3.5. 2.6.47)
- o Other professionals (paragraphs 2.6.47, 2.6.52)
- o Children (paragraph 2.1.5)

- o Women (paragraph 2.1.5)
- o Minorities such as Yezidis, Christians or Turkmen (paragraph 2.5.1)
- o Shia civilians in Baghdad (paragraphs 2.5.2, 2.6.19, 2.6.20, 2.6.24 - 2.6.26)
- o Perceived government collaborators/ISIL opponents (paragraph 2.1.8)
- o Those not adhering to Sharia law (paragraph 2.1.8)

There is also a variance between the guidance highlighted above in '1.3 Consideration of Issues' at paragraph 1.3.30 and that provided at paragraph 1.3.39 in the 'Policy Summary'. Paragraph 1.3.39 considers that such "particular factors relevant to the person's individual circumstances" might only be of relevance for individuals fleeing Baghdad and Babil governorates, whilst paragraph 1.3.30 also refers to those individuals fleeing the Southern governorates, which the UK Home Office defines as Basrah, Kerbala, Najaf, Muthanna, Thi-Qar, Missan, Quadissiya and Wassit.

Additional illustrative, non-exhaustive COI available in the public domain focusing on the past 6 months further illustrates that the following specific profiles are likely to be at risk of being targeted in Baghdad, Babil and the southern governorates:

[N.B. Some of these sources have also been included in the 'CIG on security situation' but additional relevant excerpts were omitted.

- o *Targeted attacks and violence against Sunnis*
- o *Targeted attacks and violence against members of political parties, religious and tribal figures/members*
- o *Targeted attacks and violence against government employees (incl. security forces)*
- o *Targeted attacks and violence against other professionals*
- o *Targeted attacks and violence against children*
- o *Targeted attacks and violence against women*
- o *Targeted attacks and violence against minorities such as Yezidis, Christians or Turkmen*
- o *Targeted attacks and violence against Shia civilians*
- o *Targeted attacks and violence against perceived government collaborators/ISIL opponents*
- o *Targeted attacks and violence against those not adhering to Sharia law*

N.B. Available COI also indicates that these profiles are also directly targeted in northern Iraq, including the disputed territories, but as these regions are beyond the scope of the CIG under review, such COI has not been presented here.]

Targeted attacks and violence against Sunnis

➤ UN Security Council, Third report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 2169 (2014), 1 May 2015 [reporting period 02/02/2015-01/05/2015]
[…] III. Update on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the United Nations country team […]
C. Human rights developments and activities […]
48. Throughout the reporting period, ISIL and associated armed groups also continued to target persons and groups suspected of being allied with the Government of Iraq or opposed to their ideology, in particular members of the Iraqi security forces and police […]
52. In addition to ISIL violations of human rights, UNAMI continued to receive reports that anti-ISIL armed groups and militias were perpetrating extrajudicial killings of captured ISIL fighters and associated armed

groups, abducting civilians, looting and other crimes. Members of the Sunni community were particularly affected […]

➢ Agence France-Presse, Iraqi Sunni tribal leader assassinated in Baghdad, 14 February 2015
A Sunni tribal leader and at least seven other people were killed in Baghdad in an attack that could further inflame sectarian tension in Iraq, officials said Saturday.
Unidentified gunmen attacked a two-car convoy carrying Sheikh Qassem Sweidan al-Janabi and his nephew, lawmaker Zeid al-Janabi, late Friday, officials and security sources said.
Janabi was later released but the tribal leader, seen as a moderate Sunni, as well as his son and at least six other people, mostly bodyguards, were killed. […]
Adnan al-Janabi, another MP from the same tribe, said the assassinated tribal leader was a key player in efforts to combat sectarianism. He said Sheikh Janabi, who was a particularly prominent figure in the religiously mixed areas south of Baghdad, had "a known history of confronting terrorism, sectarianism, and supporting national reconciliation." He also said his only son, Mohamed, who was killed in the attack, had just returned after completing a PhD in law at the University of Glasgow. […]

➢ UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights/UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, February 2015
[…] Violations and abuses committed by ISIL
Killings and abductions
ISIL and associated armed groups continued to carry out a range of executions and targeted killings in areas under its control and in those areas affected by conflict, particularly in Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din governorates. Targets included […] members and former members of the largely Sunni pro-government Sahwa, Sunni religious and tribal leaders […]
Attacks against ethnic and religious communities […]
Attacks against Sunni
There was a marked increase in attacks on Sunni Arabs perceived to be disloyal to ISIL, including killings, threats and abductions of tribal members and religious leaders, in particular in the Anbar governorate. […]
Violations committed by the Government of Iraq security forces and associated forces […]
Extrajudicial and summary executions […]
Militias and other armed groups are active in several governorates, particularly in Diyala and Salah al-Din, where allegations of human rights abuses have been received by UNAMI/OHCHR, including summary executions and abductions. However, UNAMI/OHCHR has had difficulties verifying many of these reports, given that they come from areas where conflict is taking place. Some reports could only be verified much later through those who have fled their homes and communities to areas accessible to UNAMI/OHCHR. […]
On 8 October, three members of the Sunni community were abducted in and around Basra in public places during daylight hours, in front of witnesses, and in one case in close proximity to police checkpoints. Two of the victims were later released, but expressed reluctance to comment on their experience for fear of retaliation. Media and local sources alleged that militias had carried out the abductions. In response to the incidents, in a 14 October press conference the Governor of Basra and his security chiefs claimed that the abductions were criminally motivated and announced the creation of a "High Security Committee to Follow Up on Abduction Incidents." Security chiefs announced that officers would be assigned to the committee to investigate abduction cases and to take steps to prevent further incidents. At time of writing, the fate of the third abductee remained unknown. […]
Abductions and kidnappings […]
On 1 November, seven masked gunmen abducted a 50-year old male member of the Sunni community from his house in Abu al-Khaseeb district, Basra. His abductors used a white pick-up type vehicle without registration number and took him to an unknown destination. […]

➢ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2015: Iraq, 29 January 2015
[…] Government security forces and pro-government militias carried out attacks on civilians in Sunni and mixed Sunni-Shia areas, including kidnapping and summary executions, and were responsible for arbitrary arrests, disappearances, and torture. […]
Abuses by Security Forces and Government Backed-Militias […]

According to witnesses and medical and government sources, pro-government militias were responsible for the killing of 61 Sunni men between June 1 and July 9, 2014, and the killing of at least 48 Sunni men in March and April in villages and towns in an area known as the "Baghdad Belt." Dozens of residents of five towns in the Baghdad Belt said that security forces, alongside government-backed militias, attacked their towns, kidnapping and killing residents and setting fire to their homes, livestock, and crops. […]

➢ UNHCR, UNHCR Position on Returns to Iraq, October 2014

[…] Violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law […]

8. UNAMI, OHCHR and human rights organizations have also documented war crimes and human rights violations committed by the ISF and associated forces. These include extra-judicial executions of Sunni prisoners in retaliation for military advances by ISIS, as well as kidnappings and summary executions by security forces and associated groups of Sunni civilians. […]

9. Reports indicate a resurgence of sectarian reprisal with bodies of Sunni men found blindfolded, handcuffed and apparently executed, in different parts of the country, primarily in Baghdad. UNAMI reported that Sunnis in Basra governorate had been exposed to threats, abductions and killings. […]

UNHCR Position on Returns

27. As the situation in Iraq remains highly fluid and volatile, and since all parts of the country are reported to have been affected, directly or indirectly, by the ongoing crisis, UNHCR urges States not to forcibly return persons originating from Iraq until tangible improvements in the security and human rights situation have occurred. In the current circumstances, many persons fleeing Iraq are likely to meet the 1951 Convention criteria for refugee status. When, in the context of the adjudication of an individual case of a person originating from Iraq, 1951 Convention criteria are found not to apply, broader refugee criteria as contained in relevant regional instruments or complementary forms of protection are likely to apply. In the current circumstances, with massive new internal displacement coupled with a large-scale humanitarian crisis, mounting sectarian tensions and reported access restrictions, particularly into the Kurdistan Region of Iraq,

UNHCR does in principle not consider it appropriate for States to deny persons from Iraq international protection on the basis of the applicability of an internal flight or relocation alternative. […]

➢ Amnesty International, Absolute impunity: Militia rule in Iraq, October 2014

Introduction […]

In recent months, Shi'a militias have been abducting and killing Sunni civilian men in Baghdad and around the country. These militias, often armed and backed by the government of Iraq, continue to operate with varying degrees of cooperation from government forces – ranging from tacit consent to coordinated, or even joint, operations. For these reasons, Amnesty International holds the government of Iraq largely responsible for the serious human rights abuses, including war crimes, committed by these militias. The victims were abducted from their homes, workplace or from checkpoints. Many were later found dead, usually handcuffed and shot in the back of the head. Reports by families of the victims and witnesses have been corroborated by Ministry of Health workers, who told Amnesty International that in recent months they have received scores of bodies of unidentified men with gunshot wounds to the head and often with their hands bound together with metal or plastic handcuffs, rope or cloth. Photographs of several bodies shown to Amnesty International by victims' relatives and others viewed at Baghdad's morgue, reveal a consistent pattern of deliberate, execution-style killings. Some of the victims were killed even after their families had paid hefty ransoms. […]

Scores of other victims are still missing, their fate and whereabouts unknown, weeks and months after they were abducted. Amnesty International has documented dozens of cases of abductions and unlawful killings by Shi'a militias in Baghdad, Samarra and Kirkuk, with many more such cases reported all over the country. Such crimes are being perpetrated against a background of increased sectarian tensions in the country. Since Iraqi central government forces lost control of much of northern Iraq to the Sunni Islamist armed group which calls itself "the Islamic State" (IS) last June, sectarian attacks have spiraled to a level not seen since 2006-2007, the worst period of civil strife in the country's recent history. Government-backed Shi'a militias and Sunni armed opposition groups have both been targeting civilians from each other's communities. […]

Shi'a militias, for their part, have been taking advantage of the atmosphere of lawlessness and impunity to abduct and kill Sunni men, seemingly in reprisal or revenge for IS attacks and at times also to extort money from the families of those they have abducted. With government forces unable or unwilling to ensure the

security and protection of the civilian population, militias have been operating with unprecedented freedom and have been able to perpetrate such crimes with impunity. In almost all the cases mentioned in this briefing, and others reported to Amnesty International, the principal perpetrators have been members of Shi'a militias. However, the responsibility of the government for such acts, as a result of their involvement in arming and supporting these militias and the security forces' complicity or acquiescence in these serious abuses, cannot be ignored. At the same time, violations committed directly by government forces have likewise continued unabated. […]

Targeted attacks and violence against members of political parties, religious and tribal figures/members

➤ [Agence France-Presse, Iraqi Sunni tribal leader assassinated in Baghdad, 14 February 2015](#)
A Sunni tribal leader and at least seven other people were killed in Baghdad in an attack that could further inflame sectarian tension in Iraq, officials said Saturday.
Unidentified gunmen attacked a two-car convoy carrying Sheikh Qassem Sweidan al-Janabi and his nephew, lawmaker Zeid al-Janabi, late Friday, officials and security sources said.
Janabi was later released but the tribal leader, seen as a moderate Sunni, as well as his son and at least six other people, mostly bodyguards, were killed. […]
Adnan al-Janabi, another MP from the same tribe, said the assassinated tribal leader was a key player in efforts to combat sectarianism. He said Sheikh Janabi, who was a particularly prominent figure in the religiously mixed areas south of Baghdad, had "a known history of confronting terrorism, sectarianism, and supporting national reconciliation." He also said his only son, Mohamed, who was killed in the attack, had just returned after completing a PhD in law at the University of Glasgow. […]

➤ [UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights/UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, February 2015](#)
[…] Violations and abuses committed by ISIL
ISIL has continued to commit systematic and widespread violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law in its areas of control. These may in amount some instances to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and possibly genocide. It has continued to target for abduction and killing of former members of ISF, public figures, persons perceived to be associated with the Government, as well as individuals whom it regards as posing a threat to its authority. ISIL has systematically carried out executions, targeted killings and enforced disappearances of community, political, and religious leaders, as well as journalists, doctors and other professionals who failed to submit to or who questioned their authority. […]
UNAMI has recorded at least 165 executions during the reporting period that have been carried out following sentences passed by the so-called "courts" in ISIL-controlled areas. […]
Killings and abductions
ISIL and associated armed groups continued to carry out a range of executions and targeted killings in areas under its control and in those areas affected by conflict, particularly in Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din governorates. Targets included […] officials of the Government of Iraq or parliament, members and former members of the largely Sunni pro-government Sahwa, Sunni religious and tribal leaders […] Similarly, ISIL continued to carry out abductions, targeting members and former members of ISF and traditional tribal, religious and community leaders. Most of the cases that UNAMI/OHCHR was able to document took place in the Kirkuk, Salah al-Din and Ninewa governorates. […]

Targeted attacks and violence against government employees (incl. security forces)

➢ UN Security Council, Third report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 2169 (2014), 1 May 2015 [reporting period 02/02/2015-01/05/2015]
III. Update on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the United Nations country team […]
C. Human rights developments and activities […]
48. Throughout the reporting period, ISIL and associated armed groups also continued to target persons and groups suspected of being allied with the Government of Iraq or opposed to their ideology, in particular members of the Iraqi security forces and police […]
On 14 February, ISIL published a video depicting captured Peshmerga and Iraqi police locked up in cages. They were wearing orange jumpsuits, and some were being paraded through the streets of Hawija. The fate of the men remains unknown. […]

➢ UN Human Rights Council (formerly UN Commission on Human Rights): Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Iraq in the light of abuses committed by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and associated groups [A/HRC/28/18], 27 March 2015
[…] II.   Patterns of violations
  A.   Violations perpetrated by ISIL
  2.   Politically motivated attacks
29. Interviews with victims and witnesses, corroborated by reliable sources, have led the mission to reasonably conclude that there has been a pattern of attacks by members of ISIL against those it perceives to be affiliated with the Government. Targets include police officers, members of the Iraqi armed forces, the Awakening Movement, public servants, members of parliament, tribal and religious leaders, candidates in parliamentary and legislative elections and those who had publicly criticized, or were perceived to be opposed to, ISIL. Those violations were not based on perceived ethnic or religious identity but targeted Iraqis, usually Sunnis, deemed to be linked to the Government, or who refused to pledge allegiance to ISIL. […]

➢ UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights/UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, February 2015
[…] Violations and abuses committed by ISIL
ISIL has continued to commit systematic and widespread violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law in its areas of control. These may in [*sic*] amount some instances to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and possibly genocide. It has continued to target for abduction and killing of former members of ISF, public figures, persons perceived to be associated with the Government, as well as individuals whom it regards as posing a threat to its authority. […]
UNAMI has recorded at least 165 executions during the reporting period that have been carried out following sentences passed by the so-called "courts" in ISIL-controlled areas. ISIL has also continued to murder captured Iraqi security force personnel. […]
Killings and abductions ISIL and associated armed groups continued to carry out a range of executions and targeted killings in areas under its control and in those areas affected by conflict, particularly in Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din governorates. Targets included former members of ISF, members of the police, […]

➢ UNHCR, UNHCR Position on Returns to Iraq, October 2014
[…] Violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law […]
4. […] ISIS and associated armed groups have also been implicated in executing hors de combat soldiers, police and government personnel. […]
UNHCR Position on Returns
27. As the situation in Iraq remains highly fluid and volatile, and since all parts of the country are reported to have been affected, directly or indirectly, by the ongoing crisis, UNHCR urges States not to forcibly return persons originating from Iraq until tangible improvements in the security and human rights situation

have occurred. In the current circumstances, many persons fleeing Iraq are likely to meet the 1951 Convention criteria for refugee status. When, in the context of the adjudication of an individual case of a person originating from Iraq, 1951 Convention criteria are found not to apply, broader refugee criteria as contained in relevant regional instruments or complementary forms of protection are likely to apply. In the current circumstances, with massive new internal displacement coupled with a large-scale humanitarian crisis, mounting sectarian tensions and reported access restrictions, particularly into the Kurdistan Region of Iraq,

UNHCR does in principle not consider it appropriate for States to deny persons from Iraq international protection on the basis of the applicability of an internal flight or relocation alternative. […]

Targeted attacks and violence against other professionals

➤ Reporters Without Borders, Mounting deadly danger for journalists in Iraq, 11 May 2015 (updated 1 June 2015)

Reporters Without Borders is deeply worried by journalist Raed Al-Joubouri's murder at his Baghdad home last week just days after another journalist, Thaer Alali, was publicly killed after being abducted by Islamic State. The generalized violence and impunity is making the situation of journalists very difficult in Iraq.

Raed Al-Joubouri was found dead in his home in the Qadissiyah district of east Baghdad on 5 May. He had been shot several times, including once in the heart. The circumstances of his death are still unclear but his father told the Journalistic Freedoms Observatory (JFO) he thought his son's death was premeditated and organized. Employed by the newspaper Azzaman and the host of a business programme on Al Rasheed TV, Joubouri was a critic of Iraqi politics and feared for his life, to the point that he had given those close to him a list of contacts to be alerted if anything happened to him, JFO director Ziad Ajili said. […]

Reporters Without Borders is also deeply saddened by journalist Ammar Al-Shahbander's death on 2 May in Baghdad. The chief of mission in Iraq for the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) was killed by a car bomb that left a total of 17 people dead and badly injured his colleague, Imad Al-Sharaa.

Al-Masar TV journalist Majed Al Rabi'i died in a Baghdad hospital on 6 May of injuries received on 29 April while travelling with Iraqi government security forces in order to cover clashes between government forces and Islamic State in Garma, a town to the east of Fallujah in Anbar province. […]

Iraq is ranked 156th out of 180 countries in the 2015 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.

➤ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Iraqi Journalists fear persecution, imprisonment, death, 4 May 2015

The world was recently reminded of the dangers faced by journalists in Iraq when threats prompted a Reuters bureau chief to leave the country. The threats against Ned Parker followed an April 3 report that detailed incidents of lynching and looting in Tikrit by Shi'ite militia forces that had helped Iraqi government recapture the city from Islamic State (IS) gunmen. A Facebook page linked to Shi'ite militias called for Parker's expulsion from Iraq, and one commenter said the best way to silence Parker would be to kill him. In the ensuing days an Iraqi television channel owned by Asaib Ahl al-Haq, an Iranian-backed armed group, accused Reuters of denigrating Iraq. Airing Parker's photo, the channel called on viewers to demand his expulsion. The threats, tied to Shi'ite militias who have fought IS alongside Iraqi government forces, were taken seriously enough to hasten Parker's departure and to impel Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi to ask for increased protection of Reuters' Baghdad office. […]

In an interview with RFE/RL Radio Free Iraq's Samira Ali Mandee, Mar'ee […] told RFE/RL that many Iraqi reporters from local news outlets who have covered the fighting between Iraqi forces and IS have been wounded, forbidden from covering events in more than one province, and detained. "This has happened in Babel, Najaf, Mosul, Salahuddin, Anbar, Diyala and other parts of Iraq," Mar'ee says. "Some journalists have been ambushed and subjected to murder attempts." Mar'ee notes that journalists have been executed in Mosul, and the fates of others who were working there are unknown. "There were 14 detained journalists in Mosul. A number were released and seven of them were moved to Raqqa, and two were executed," Mar'ee says. "We've now had six journalists executed in Mosul in addition to [local telejournalist] Ra'ad al-Azzawi, who was executed in Salahuddin, east of Tikrit."

Muhammad al-Bayati, editor in chief of the Nineveh Journalists' Network, tells RFE/RL that IS militants have transferred seven captive journalists from Mosul to Syria.

While the situation for journalists in Iraq has always been dangerous -- Bayati says that 58 journalists have been killed in Mosul since 2003 -- the number of reporters who have died in the city has increased since IS gunmen overran Mosul in June 2014. Bayati describes how, when IS militants initially overran Mosul last summer, they tried to reassure journalists, doctors, other professionals and the general population that all was well. […]

While some of Mosul's journalists left the city -- moving to Iraq's Kurdistan region or to the capital, Baghdad -- others remained, having decided to trust IS. Nevertheless, after IS consolidated its grip on Mosul, the extremist group began a campaign of liquidation against the journalists who had chosen to stay. […]

According to Bayati, IS detained around 19 journalists in Mosul, nine of whom were "intermittently released." IS gunmen killed two of the journalists, while a number of detainees were transferred from Al-Qayara near Mosul to Raqqa, IS's stronghold in Syria.

In Iraq's Salahuddin Province, journalists have been killed and abducted, and gunmen have confiscated equipment belonging to media outlets, says Marwan Jubara, the director of the Sama Salahuddin TV channel. […]

IS militants have carried out similar actions against Kurdish journalists working in areas under the control of the extremist group.

Rahman Ghareeb, director of the Metro Center for Journalist Rights and Advocacy in Iraqi Kurdistan, tells RFE/RL that IS gunmen have abducted three Kurdish journalists, whose fate remains unknown. […]

As Parker's departure underscores, Iraqi reporters do not just face persecution and threats from IS. According to Reporters Without Borders, which ranks Iraq 156th out of 180 countries in its 2015 press-freedom index, Iraqi journalists are also harassed by officials who "refuse to accept criticism and do not hesitate to bring judicial proceedings against them."

Mar'ee from the Iraqi Observatory for Journalistic Freedoms says that Iraqi journalists are particularly afraid of covering cases involving corruption. […]

- ➢ UN Security Council, Third report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 2169 (2014), 1 May 2015 [reporting period 02/02/2015-01/05/2015]
  III. Update on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the United Nations country team […]
  C. Human rights developments and activities […]
  49. Respect for freedom of expression remains of concern in Iraq, as journalists and media professionals continue to be subjected to threats, intimidation and more serous violence in carrying out their work. UNAMI received reports that ISIL continued to target journalists, executing one on 4 March. On 9 April an international journalist working for Reuters was forced to leave Iraq after he was subjected to a campaign involving death threats on the media after he filed reports of violations allegedly carried out by armed militia during the campaign to liberate Tikrit from ISIL. […]

- ➢ UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights/UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, February 2015
  […] Violations and abuses committed by ISIL
  ISIL has continued to commit systematic and widespread violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law in its areas of control. These may in amount some instances to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and possibly genocide. […]
  ISIL has systematically carried out executions, targeted killings and enforced disappearances of community, political, and religious leaders, as well as journalists, doctors and other professionals who failed to submit to or who questioned their authority. […]
  UNAMI has recorded at least 165 executions during the reporting period that have been carried out following sentences passed by the so-called "courts" in ISIL-controlled areas. […]
  Killings and abductions
  ISIL and associated armed groups continued to carry out a range of executions and targeted killings in areas under its control and in those areas affected by conflict, particularly in Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din governorates. Targets included […] and, increasingly, professionals such as journalists, lawyers, doctors, and other civilians. […] Most of the cases that UNAMI/OHCHR was able to document took place in the Kirkuk, Salah al-Din and Ninewa governorates. […]

Torture and excessive use of force […]
As security tensions have mounted, checkpoints have also become flashpoints for tension, harassment and excessive force. […]
In late November, UNAMI/OHCHR learned from multiple sources about the death of a lawyer, apparently from torture, that had occurred on 28 June. The lawyer was allegedly arrested under Article 4 of Anti-terrorism Law number 13 of 2005. Reportedly, the victim was detained in a detention center at Baghdad International Airport, where he underwent torture during interrogation to force him to confess to terrorism-related crimes. An investigative judge then ordered "deeper investigation" due to the accused refusal to confess following the first round of interrogations. The victim was subjected to further torture and died on 28 June in custody. UNAMI/OHCHR has obtained photographs of the deceased that appear to show marks and injuries consistent with the claims that he was subjected to torture prior to his death. […]
Assassinations/killings […]
On 9 November reports were received that police in Iskandariya found the bodies of a Babil Governorate Council member abducted in July, and a Babil judge abducted in August. According to local sources, both victims had been critics of the previous Government. […]
Abductions and kidnappings […]
On 23 November, two chief engineers from the Ninewa Water Department (NWD) were abducted in Baghdad by unknown assailants. The two engineers were in Baghdad on a mission to discuss salary issues concerning employees of NWD with the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works. […]
On 11 September, three gunmen in military uniforms abducted the Deputy Dean of Shatt al-Arab College, near al-Fayha Hospital in Basra city center. The Police Chief in Basra announced to the media that on 13 September, his forces raided a safe house located in the marshlands, north of Basra, and rescued the victim. No ransom was allegedly paid to the abductors, who avoided capture. […]

➢ Minority Rights Group International/Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, No Place to Turn: Violence against women in the Iraq conflict, February 2015
[…] 2 Assassinations and 'moral' crimes […]
Assassinations of politicians, journalists and professionals
Female professionals throughout Iraq have also been directly targeted for taking on active public roles, whether as lawyers, doctors, journalists, politicians or activists. In the post-invasion social and political culture in Iraq, it has become dangerous for women to take on roles outside the home […]
The Iraqi Women Journalists Forum has documented 28 cases of female journalists assassinated between 2003 and 2013. In addition, many more journalists have been assaulted, threatened, abused or displaced. […]

Targeted attacks and violence against children

➢ UN Security Council, Third report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 2169 (2014), 1 May 2015 [reporting period 02/02/2015-01/05/2015]
III. Update on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the United Nations country team […]
C. Human rights developments and activities […]
54. The ongoing armed conflict and acts of terrorism continued to detrimentally affect children in Iraq. The Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, co-chaired by UNAMI and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), documented 26 incidents negatively affecting children during the reporting period. Acts of terrorism and armed conflict, particularly crossfiring, indiscriminate shelling and improvised explosive devices, claimed at least 23 child casualties (7 killed and 16 injured), although many cases of child casualties may go unreported. In addition, there was a marked increase in the number of reports received by UNAMI of child recruitment by ISIL in all areas under its control, as well as by pro-Government militias in all conflict-affected areas, including in Baghdad and Basra. […]

➢ UN Human Rights Council (formerly UN Commission on Human Rights): Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Iraq in

the light of abuses committed by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and associated groups [A/HRC/28/18], 27 March 2015

[…] II.   Patterns of violations

  A.   Violations perpetrated by ISIL

4.   Recruitment and use of children

44. Based on information provided by victims and witnesses, it is reasonable to conclude that ISIL used, conscripted or enlisted children between the ages of 8 and 18 to participate in the armed conflict, in breach of international human rights law, international criminal law and customary international humanitarian law.

45. The mission investigators interviewed Yezidi children who had escaped ISIL captivity. In August 2014, following the abduction of thousands of Yezidis by ISIL fighters, children aged between 8 and 15 were separated from their mothers and transferred to different locations in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, including a school in Tel Afar and a school on the outskirts of Raqqa, Syrian Arab Republic. Children recounted how they had received religious and military training following their forced conversion. Training lasted from 13 days to 3 weeks and included how to load and unload guns, shoot using live bullets and launch small and medium-sized rockets. Boys reported being forced to watch videos of beheadings several times. When they refused, they were severely beaten. A child was told: "this is your initiation into jihad, you have to be strong, because you will do this when you will go to jihad for the Islamic State; you are an Islamic State boy now". […]

➢ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding observations on the combined second to fourth periodic reports of Iraq, 3 March 2015

[…] B. General principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12 of the Convention) […]

Right to life, survival and development

23. The Committee abhors and condemns the targeted and brutal killings of children by the so-called ISIL and in particular:

(a) The systematic killing of children belonging to religious and ethnic minorities by the so-called ISIL, including several cases of mass executions of boys, as well as reports of beheadings and crucifixions of children and the burying of children alive;

(b) The killing or severe injury of a very large number of children as a result of the current fighting, including by air strikes, shelling and military operations by the Iraqi Security Forces, and as a result of landmines and explosive war remnants. This includes deaths from dehydration, starvation and heat in conflict-affected areas;

(c) The abduction by the so-called ISIL of a large number of children, many of whom are severely traumatized from witnessing the murder of their parents and are subjected to physical and sexual assault. […]

D. Violence against children (arts. 19, 24, para. 3, 28, para. 2, 34, 37 (a) and 39) […]

Sexual slavery

44. The Committee abhors the continuing sexual enslavement of children since the emergence of the so-called ISIL, in particular of children belonging to minority groups who are held by ISIL. It notes with the utmost concern the "markets" set up by ISIL, in which they sell abducted children and women after attaching price tags to them; and the sexual enslavement of children detained in makeshift prisons of ISIL, such as the former Badoush prison outside Mosul […]

Children deprived of a family environment

52. The Committee is extremely concerned about the significant number of children who have been forcibly separated from their parents during displacement, or whose parents have been forced to leave them with the so-called ISIL under threat of the death of the child. The Committee is also concerned about the large number of children who have lost their families during the many years of conflict, and about the lack of measures and strategies to provide these children with protection and alternative care, in particular foster care. […]

➢ Minority Rights Group, Between the Millstones: The State of Iraq's Minorities Since the Fall of Mosul, February 2015

[…] 3 Background on affected minorities in the conflict zone. […]

Minority women and children

Although little disaggregated data is available, it is essential to highlight the particular situation of minority women and children. Besides the ongoing sexual violence and slavery in ISIS-controlled areas, minority women and children represent the most vulnerable group in Iraqi society, both as members of minority communities and as women and children. This effectively makes for double discrimination and increases the risk of exploitation and violence. […]
Children have also been particularly targeted by ISIS forces for killing, sexual violence and recruitment […]

- UNHCR, UNHCR Position on Returns to Iraq, October 2014
  […] Violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law […]
  10. The violence has impacted severely on Iraqi children. Up to 700 children have been killed or maimed in Iraq since the beginning of the year, including in summary executions. Reports indicate that children are at risk of recruitment by armed groups from all sides of the conflict, including those supported or backed by the government and those fighting alongside ISIS and associated armed groups. ISIS has reportedly used children as suicide bombers. […]

- UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Human Rights Council convenes a Special Session on abuses committed in Iraq by ISIL, 2 September 2014
  […] Children belonging to ethnic and religious communities targeted by ISIL have also been put at risk. The Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, said that the impact of armed violence on children had reached unprecedented level during the current crisis. "The most reported violations remain the killing and maiming of children. Six-hundred and ninety-three child casualties have been reported since the beginning of the year," Zerrouigui said, noting that most casualties were due to indiscriminate attacks by Government forces and armed groups including ISIL and affiliates. She also highlighted that young boys had been executed along other civilians by armed opposition groups, including ISIL. […] She was also concerned by the recruitment of children by armed groups from all sides of the conflict, although the Iraqi authorities had given instructions to Government-backed militias to prevent it. […]
  Zerrougui referred to unverified reports of sexual violence and forced marriages that have emerged in the last few months, saying that young girls from minority groups were being abducted for these purposes. […]

Targeted attacks and violence against women

- UN Security Council, Third report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 2169 (2014), 1 May 2015 [reporting period 02/02/2015-01/05/2015]
  […] III. Update on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the United Nations country team […]
  C. Human rights developments and activities […]
  46. Violations of women's rights by ISIL and associated armed groups continue to be of grave concern. Thousands of women and children, particularly from the Yezidi and other minority communities, remain in ISIL captivity. Women who escaped ISIL captivity confirmed in interviews with UNAMI that many of them had been trafficked as slaves and been subjected to sexual and physical violence. […]

- UN Security Council, Conflict-related sexual violence: Report of the Secretary-General, 23 March 2015
  […] Iraq
  28. Armed violence in Iraq resulted in more than 15,000 fatalities among civilians and security personnel in 2014, making the reporting period one of the deadliest years on record since 2003. On 29 June 2014, ISIL declared an "Islamic caliphate" extending from Aleppo province in the Syrian Arab Republic to Diyala province in Iraq. Sexual violence has been used as part of the ISIL strategy of spreading terror, persecuting ethnic and religious minorities and suppressing communities that oppose its ideology. Following its seizure of Mosul and surrounding areas in June 2014, ISIL instituted a pattern of sexual violence, slavery, abduction and human trafficking; three cases of forced abortion perpetrated because of the ethnicity of

the victim were documented by the Government. Sexual and reproductive health services, trauma counselling and reintegration support are severely limited.

29. Many of the women and girls who have fled from ISIL-controlled areas report brutal physical and sexual assaults, including sexual slavery and forced marriage. Young women are being "sold" in open markets or "given" to ISIL fighters as gifts. First-hand accounts from internally displaced persons confirm reports of systematic sexual violence, particularly against Yezidi women and girls, with most victims aged between 8 and 35 years. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) notes that ISIL purportedly issued a "regulation" setting out the prices to be paid for Yezidi and Christian women and girls, the amounts varying according to age. Indeed, the promise of sexual access to women and girls has been used in ISIL propaganda materials as part of its recruitment strategy. UNAMI reported that as of 6 November 2014, approximately 2,500 women and children, most of them members of ethnic and religious minorities, remained in captivity with ISIL in northern Iraq. My Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, noting that an estimated 1,500 civilians may have been forced into sexual slavery, has condemned the abduction and detention of Yezidi, Christian, Turkomen and Shabak women and children.

30. Attacks on women and girls as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals have taken place as a form of "moral cleansing" by armed groups. Concern has also been expressed about incidents of sexual torture of women and men in Iraqi detention facilities. On 6 February 2014, Iraq became the first nation in the Arab world to adopt a national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) that includes elements addressing sexual violence. […]

- ➢ [UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights/UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, February 2015](#)

[…] Violations and abuses committed by ISIL

ISIL has continued to commit systematic and widespread violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law in its areas of control. These may in amount some instances to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and possibly genocide. […]

Female community and political leaders have been particularly targeted. UNAMI has recorded at least 165 executions during the reporting period that have been carried out following sentences passed by the so-called "courts" in ISIL-controlled areas. […]

During the reporting period, direct OHCHR/UNAMI contact with some women and children in ISIL captivity has waned and largely ceased; however, some of the women and children who had been abducted by ISIL managed to escape and made their way into KR-I, where they have been interviewed by UNAMI/OHCHR. Many of these women confirmed that they, and often their teenage children, had been abducted by ISIL and had been subjected to sexual slavery, trafficking, and other forms of sexual and physical abuse. […]

Rights of Women/gender-based violence including sexual violence

ISIL continues to perpetrate gross violations of the rights of women, subjecting women and children (both male and female) to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), particularly those from diverse religious and ethnic communities, particularly the Yezidi, who have been abducted by ISIL since August. Women also face severe restrictions on other rights, including freedom of movement, and face severe penalties, including lashings and execution, for transgressions of ISIL rules. As previously noted, ISIL has been targeting women community and political leaders, subjecting them to abduction, torture and murder. […]

ISIL has applied strict codes of behaviour on women and girls in areas under its control: when leaving their homes must be fully covered and accompanied by a male relative; certain occupations have been prohibited for women, and girls' education has been curtailed or limited to only those topics deemed acceptable to ISIL. Concerning the fate of the thousands of women and children abducted by ISIL since August, UNAMI/OHCHR has received an increasing number of reports from September onwards of women and children managing to escape from ISIL and making their way to KR-I or other areas of safety. UNAMI/OHCHR has conducted a large number of interviews with these women, who confirmed that they were detained, sometimes in large groups numbering in the hundreds, or in smaller groups or as individuals; that they were moved a number of times, including in some instances to Syria; that they were held in a variety of locations including former schools, public buildings, hotels, citadels and prisons; and that many were forcibly married to ISIL fighters or were sold as slaves in auctions, and were subjected to sexual and gender based violence. […]

➢ Minority Rights Group International/Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, No Place to Turn: Violence against women in the Iraq conflict, February 2015

Introduction […]

Women are threatened by all sides of the conflict: by the armed groups which threaten, kill, and rape them; by the male-dominated security and police forces which fail to protect them and are often complicit in violence against them; and by criminal groups which take advantage of their desperate circumstances. They are simultaneously betrayed by a broader political, legal and cultural context that allows perpetrators of gender-based violence to go free and stigmatizes or punishes victims. […]

This report documents violence against women directly related to the conflict in Iraq, with a particular focus on violations perpetrated during the upsurge in violence throughout 2013 and 2014. It covers violations perpetrated by all parties to the conflict, including the Iraqi army and police forces, militias with direct or indirect government support, and armed groups fighting against the government, such as ISIS. […]

2 Assassinations and 'moral' crimes […]

Militia imposition of moral codes

Since 2003, the various militias patrolling the neighbourhoods of Iraq's cities have imposed their own dress codes in the areas they control in accordance with their ideologies. Many observers have noted that it is impossible for a woman to walk unveiled in some areas of Baghdad. University students have been harassed and intimidated at the gates of Baghdad, Mosul and Basra universities for not wearing the hijab. […]

After the withdrawal of American troops at the end of 2011, violent campaigns by both Shi'a and Sunni armed groups continued. According to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Iraqi NGOs reported at least 60 women killed during 2013 for 'moral' reasons. On 22 May 2013, seven women and five men were killed by silenced weapons at a brothel in the Zayouna district of Baghdad. In June 2013, gunmen shot dead seven women in Basra, who had previously received threats accusing them of prostitution. On 10 July, three women were killed in their home in Baghdad's Zayouna district, and another three women were killed in Ur district on 18 July. On 3 August, three women were killed by unknown gunmen in Buhriz district, Diyala. On 31 October, three women were shot and killed in Baghdad. On 29 November, the bodies of three women were found in Baghdad, showing signs of torture. On 30 November, two women and two children were killed when gunmen attacked their home in the Doura district of Baghdad.

On 4 September 2013, gunmen massacred sixteen members of the same Shi'a family in Latifiya, south of Baghdad. Of the victims, eight were women and six were children. Since early 2014, the rising threat posed by ISIS has meant the revival of many Shi'a militias, encouraged by the Maliki government as partners in the fight against ISIS. […]

There have been many recent spates of violence targeting women, especially in the capital. On 7 January 2014, seven women, presumed to be prostitutes, were killed in the Zayouna district of eastern Baghdad along with five men. In early June 2014, it was reported that armed men entered a restaurant in central Baghdad, singled out the female waitresses, and shot them one by one. On 13 July 2014 twenty-eight women and five men were found massacred in two apartments, again in the Zayouna district. It is widely believed that Shi'a militias were behind the massacre of the women, who were suspected of being prostitutes, although no charges have been made. […]

3 Abductions

Abduction of both women and men has been widely practised since the outbreak of the conflict, including enforced disappearances, kidnapping for ransom, and abductions for trafficking (see chapter 5). Even if the victim is later released, abduction has particularly severe consequences for women. Concerns of family honour dictate that women and girls who have been kidnapped will likely face long-lasting stigma at best and murder at the hands of their families at worst, since it will often be assumed that a woman who has been abducted has been sexually assaulted, whether or not that was actually the case.

The Iraqi Ministry of the Interior registered 732 abductions of women between 2003 and 2006 as well as 197 cases in the year 2009 alone. The true numbers are likely to be much higher since many families conceal the fact that their daughters have been abducted. In a recent example, in September 2014, members of the Shi'a militia Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq kidnapped Sara Hamid Niran, the wife of deputy prime minister Roz Nuri Shaways, from the city of Basra. The militia demanded a ransom of $1.66 million for her release, but she managed to escape from a window after being moved to Baghdad, leading to a gunfight between police and members of the militia.

ISIS has practised abduction on a mass scale throughout 2014 as a method of controlling populations, spreading fear, and procuring wives for its fighters. […]
Other organizations have provided varying estimates of the total number of hostages being held by ISIS. One human rights organization reported the number of kidnapped women as 3,070 as of November 2014. […]
4 Rape and sexual assault
The police, security forces and militias […]
Members of the police are known to be perpetrators of gender-based violence. Sexual assault is frequently used during police interrogation as a method of extracting confessions, and is also widespread within the detention system. According to a report released by Human Rights Watch, some prisons administer a pregnancy test before admitting women to the facility because the likelihood of a woman being raped in the predetention phase is so high. The threat or actual rape of female family members is also used as a method of torture for male detainees. Many women who have been unable to give information about the whereabouts of their husbands, fathers or brothers have also been detained and subject to physical and sexual abuse based on allegations of 'covering up' terrorist activities. […]
Militias on all sides of the conflict have been known to use sexual violence as a method exerting control and humiliating their opponents. At the height of the sectarian conflict, organizations reported that Shi'a and Sunni militias were taking revenge on one another by raping women from the other sect. With the renewed increase in militia activity over the past year, there are worries about the consequences for women […]
5 Trafficking in women and girls […]
Patterns of trafficking [..]
As detailed in other sections of this report, ISIS has become a major actor in the buying and selling of women and girls. According to some media reports, ISIS depends on human trafficking as a major source of funding as well as a technique to attract male recruits. […]

> Minority Rights Group, Between the Millstones: The State of Iraq's Minorities Since the Fall of Mosul, February 2015
> […] 3 Background on affected minorities in the conflict zone. […]
> Minority women and children
> Although little disaggregated data is available, it is essential to highlight the particular situation of minority women and children. Besides the ongoing sexual violence and slavery in ISIS-controlled areas, minority women and children represent the most vulnerable group in Iraqi society, both as members of minority communities and as women and children. This effectively makes for double discrimination and increases the risk of exploitation and violence.
> Women in Iraq generally face high levels of gender based violence, including female genital mutilation, domestic violence, sexual harassment, murders in the name of honour, forced and early marriage, and human trafficking. These crimes continue to be perpetrated with impunity, with few prosecutions for rape and other acts of violence, exacerbated by the current violence that affects all minorities in the north. […]
> 4 Violence and forced displacement […]
> Sexual and gender-based violence […]
> There have been numerous reports of sexual abuse, rape, abductions, enslavement and other violations of a sexual nature perpetrated by ISIS militants on women and children across Iraq. In many cases, sexual violence has been used as a tool of terror and coercion. […]

> UN News Centre, ISIL unlawful 'shari'a courts' meting out 'monstrous' punishments, UN warns, 20 January 2015
> The United Nations human rights office today confirmed that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has established unlawful, so-called 'shari'a courts' in the territory under its control that have been carrying out cruel and inhuman punishments against men, women and children. […]

> UNHCR, UNHCR Position on Returns to Iraq, October 2014
> […] Violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law […]
> 6. Reports also describe severe sexual violence to which women and teenage girls and boys have been exposed by ISIS. The UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Nickolay

Mladenov, condemned in the strongest terms the "barbaric acts" of sexual violence and "savage rapes" perpetrated by ISIS against members of minority groups in areas under its control. There are also reports of human trafficking within and outside Iraq and of abduction of women, particularly those belonging to minority groups, by ISIS and associated groups. […]

➤ Middle East Monitor, Armed militias attack and displace tribes in Babil, 17 September 2014
Armed militias loyal to Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki raped women in the town of Jurf Al-Sakhr, in the north of the Babil governorate, the Baghdad Centre for Human Rights said yesterday. The organisation said in a statement that last Wednesday, militias stormed a house and raped a 20-year-old woman after they arrested 18 men from the area. The statement said the centre received documents confirming the incident involving the woman who is also a mother of two. They also published a video that includes testimonies of two women describing the militia's attack on women and men in the region. A security source said earlier that six women were killed after being raped in the Babil governorate, 100 kilometres south of Baghdad. The source, who declined to be named, told Al-Araby Al-Jadeed news agency that the women's bodies were found dumped on the side of the road, a few hours after their disappearances. The source explained that elements from the Saraya Al-Salam, Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq, and Badr militias imposed a blockade on the region in order to provide support for the Iraqi army in its attempt to regain control of an area controlled by the Islamic State (ISIS). […]

Targeted attacks and violence against minorities such as Yezidis, Christians or Turkmen

➤ UN Security Council, Third report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 2169 (2014), 1 May 2015 [reporting period 02/02/2015-01/05/2015]
[…] III. Update on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the United Nations country team […]
C. Human rights developments and activities […]
46. Violations of women's rights by ISIL and associated armed groups continue to be of grave concern. Thousands of women and children, particularly from the Yezidi and other minority communities, remain in ISIL captivity. Women who escaped ISIL captivity confirmed in interviews with UNAMI that many of them had been trafficked as slaves and been subjected to sexual and physical violence. […]

➤ UN Human Rights Council (formerly UN Commission on Human Rights): Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Iraq in the light of abuses committed by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and associated groups [A/HRC/28/18], 27 March 2015
[…] II.   Patterns of violations
    A.   Violations perpetrated by ISIL
    1.   Attacks against religious and ethnic groups
16. The mission gathered reliable information about acts of violence perpetrated against civilians because of their affiliation or perceived affiliation to an ethnic or religious group. It is reasonable to conclude, in the light of the information gathered overall, that some of those incidents may constitute genocide. Other incidents may amount to crimes against humanity or war crimes. Ethnic and religious groups targeted by ISIL include Yezidis, Christians, Turkmen, Sabea-Mandeans, Kaka'e, Kurds and Shia.
    (a)   Attacks against Yezidis
17. Based on interviews conducted with victims and witnesses, corroborated by other sources, the mission collected information regarding the killing of members of the Yezidi community and acts that caused serious bodily or mental harm to members of that group. The information also pointed to the intent of ISIL to destroy the Yezidi as a group when perpetrating those acts and to the existence of a manifest pattern of attacks against that community, whose identity is based on its religious beliefs. If confirmed, such conduct may amount to genocide. Numerous Yezidi witnesses provided credible and consistent accounts of separate incidents and attacks, detailing how they were forced to convert to Islam or face death. […]
    (b)   Attacks against Christians

21. Although perceived as the "People of the Book", a classification that grants them a certain protection in comparison with other ethnic and religious groups, Christians suffered forced displacement and deprivation of property. […]

Attacks against Shia

23. Interviews conducted with victims and witnesses, corroborated by reliable sources, make it reasonable to conclude that attacks were perpetrated against Turkmen, Shabak and other Shia groups. […]

3.   Sexual and gender-based violence

35. The mission gathered corroborated witness statements indicating clear patterns of sexual and gender-based violence against Yezidi women. When attacking Yezidi villages, ISIL reportedly engaged in the systematic and widespread killing of men, including boys over the age of 14. Women and children were subjected to different violations. Accounts indicate that ISIL views captured women and children as spoils of war which it owns. Numerous interviews conducted with Yezidi women and girls who fled ISIL captivity between November 2014 and January 2015 provided reliable information on killings, widespread and systematic enslavement, including selling of women, rape, and sexual slavery, the forced transfer of women and children, and inhuman and degrading treatment. Many of the women interviewed were able to identify the origins of their ISIL captors, who were from a wide range of countries.

36. Following the systematic separation of men, women and young children, Yezidi women were further divided into three groups: married women with children, married women without children, and unmarried women and young girls. Each of those groups was transferred to different locations in ISIL-controlled territory. Some victims were transferred to more than 10 different locations during a four-month period. These repeated displacements were apparently intended to reinforce ISIL control over the victims by instilling in them feelings of fear, insecurity and disorientation.

37. Girls and unmarried women who escaped from ISIL captivity consistently recounted the process by which they were raped and sexually enslaved. ISIL members numbered them or recorded their names on lists, and inspected them to evaluate their beauty. While some were given as "gifts", others were sold to local or foreign ISIL fighters. Some victims were privy to price negotiations between "vendors" and "buyers." An "emir" would instruct ISIL fighters to inspect and choose girls for "marriage". Girls would then be prepared for "marriage" (rape), involving, in some cases, full body searches. Mission investigators met with victims as young as 11 years of age. […]

B.   Individual criminal responsibility

76. The following crimes may have been committed.

• Genocide, by killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm and forced transfer of children, as part of a manifest pattern of similar conduct aimed at the destruction of a particular group. Information gathered strongly suggests that ISIL may have perpetrated those crimes against the Yezidi population.

• Crimes against humanity, such as murder, enslavement, deportation or forcible transfer of population, imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty, torture, rape, sexual slavery, sexual violence and persecution, committed as part of widespread and systematic attacks directed against civilian populations pursuant to, or in furtherance of, an organizational policy to commit such attacks. Information provided strongly suggests that ISIL has perpetrated some of those crimes against Christian, Shia and Yezidi communities.

➢ UN Security Council, Conflict-related sexual violence: Report of the Secretary-General, 23 March 2015

[…] Iraq

28. Armed violence in Iraq resulted in more than 15,000 fatalities among civilians and security personnel in 2014, making the reporting period one of the deadliest years on record since 2003. On 29 June 2014, ISIL declared an "Islamic caliphate" extending from Aleppo province in the Syrian Arab Republic to Diyala province in Iraq. Sexual violence has been used as part of the ISIL strategy of spreading terror, persecuting ethnic and religious minorities and suppressing communities that oppose its ideology. Following its seizure of Mosul and surrounding areas in June 2014, ISIL instituted a pattern of sexual violence, slavery, abduction and human trafficking; three cases of forced abortion perpetrated because of the ethnicity of the victim were documented by the Government. Sexual and reproductive health services, trauma counselling and reintegration support are severely limited.

29. Many of the women and girls who have fled from ISIL-controlled areas report brutal physical and sexual assaults, including sexual slavery and forced marriage. Young women are being "sold" in open markets or "given" to ISIL fighters as gifts. First-hand accounts from internally displaced persons confirm

reports of systematic sexual violence, particularly against Yezidi women and girls, with most victims aged between 8 and 35 years. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) notes that ISIL purportedly issued a "regulation" setting out the prices to be paid for Yezidi and Christian women and girls, the amounts varying according to age. Indeed, the promise of sexual access to women and girls has been used in ISIL propaganda materials as part of its recruitment strategy. UNAMI reported that as of 6 November 2014, approximately 2,500 women and children, most of them members of ethnic and religious minorities, remained in captivity with ISIL in northern Iraq. My Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, noting that an estimated 1,500 civilians may have been forced into sexual slavery, has condemned the abduction and detention of Yezidi, Christian, Turkomen and Shabak women and children. [...]

➢ UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights/UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, February 2015
Summary [...]
members of Iraq's diverse ethnic and religious communities, including Turkmen, Shabaks, Christians, Yezidi, Sabaeans, Kaka'e, Faili Kurds, Shi'ite Arab, and others have been intentionally and systematically targeted by ISIL and associated armed groups and subjected to gross human rights abuses, in what appears as a deliberate policy aimed at destroying, suppressing or expelling these communities permanently from areas under their control
[...] Violations and abuses committed by ISIL
Members of diverse ethnic and religious communities, including Turkmen, Shabak, Christians, Yezidi, Sabaeans, Kaka'e, Faili Kurds, Shi'a Arabs, and others, continued to suffer from a range of violations at the hands of ISIL and those associated with them, including executions and other targeted killings, abductions, rape and other forms of sexual and gender based violence perpetrated against women and children, slavery and trafficking of women and children, forced recruitment of children, destruction or desecration of places of religious or cultural significance, wanton destruction and looting of property, and denial of fundamental freedoms. ISIL targeting of these communities appears to be part of a systematic policy aimed at destroying, suppressing or expelling these communities permanently from areas under its control. [...]
Killings and abductions
ISIL and associated armed groups continued to carry out a range of executions and targeted killings in areas under its control and in those areas affected by conflict, particularly in Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din governorates. Targets included [...] members and former members of the largely Sunni pro-government Sahwa, Sunni religious and tribal leaders [...]
Attacks against ethnic and religious communities
As noted above, ISIL continues to subject members of diverse ethnic and religious communities to widespread and systematic violations in a policy that is apparently aimed at permanently suppressing, expelling or destroying these communities within areas of its control.
Attacks against Christians
UNAMI/OHCHR continued to receive reports of attacks on Christians in areas under the control of ISIL, although many of these have not been verified. [...]
Attacks against Shabak
UNAMI/OHCHR received reports that members of the Shabak community continue to be directly targeted by ISIL through killings and abductions. In September, displaced members of the Shi'a Shabak community reported they had been subjected to abductions and harsh interrogations by ISIL who were searching for members of ISF and those affiliated with them, either Shi'a or Sunni. [...]

➢ Minority Rights Group International: From Crisis to Catastrophe: the situation of minorities in Iraq, October 2014
Introduction
Iraq has historically been home to a rich tapestry of ethnic and religious communities whose history of coexistence in the region dates back thousands of years. In addition to the three main components of Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs and Sunni Kurds, Iraq's demographic composition includes ethnic and religious minorities, such as ChaldoAssyrian and Armenian Christians, Turkmen, Yezidis, Kaka'i, Shabak, Sabean-Mandaeans, Baha'i, and Faili Kurds, as well as Roma and Black Iraqis. [...]

The situation of minorities in Iraq has now reached the point of desperation. Many minority communities have been reduced in size by emigration and killing to the point that they are now in danger of extinction in Iraq. Villages in Ninewa governorate that have been home to minority communities for thousands of years have been all but emptied of their inhabitants. Across Iraq, the minorities who do remain live in constant fear for their safety. Their religious sites are the target of attacks and they are afraid of openly displaying their religious identities. Their areas suffer from deliberate neglect and they face high barriers in accessing education, employment, housing, healthcare and other essential services. Those who try to start a new life in the relatively safer Kurdistan region face a whole new set of obstacles, from linguistic barriers, discrimination, political marginalization and difficulty in finding employment and accessing public services. […]

➢ UNHCR, UNHCR Position on Returns to Iraq, October 2014
[…] Violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law […]
[…] The situation has been described as particularly dire for members of religious and ethnic minority groups, including Christians, Yezidis, Turkmen, Shabak, Kaka'i, SabaeanMandaeans and Shi'ites, as ISIS and associated armed groups "intentionally and systematically targeted these communities for gross human rights abuses, at times aimed at destroying, suppressing or cleansing them from areas under their control." […]
UNHCR Position on Returns
27. As the situation in Iraq remains highly fluid and volatile, and since all parts of the country are reported to have been affected, directly or indirectly, by the ongoing crisis, UNHCR urges States not to forcibly return persons originating from Iraq until tangible improvements in the security and human rights situation have occurred. In the current circumstances, many persons fleeing Iraq are likely to meet the 1951 Convention criteria for refugee status. When, in the context of the adjudication of an individual case of a person originating from Iraq, 1951 Convention criteria are found not to apply, broader refugee criteria as contained in relevant regional instruments or complementary forms of protection are likely to apply. In the current circumstances, with massive new internal displacement coupled with a large-scale humanitarian crisis, mounting sectarian tensions and reported access restrictions, particularly into the Kurdistan Region of Iraq,
UNHCR does in principle not consider it appropriate for States to deny persons from Iraq international protection on the basis of the applicability of an internal flight or relocation alternative. […]

Targeted attacks and violence against Shia civilians

➢ Agence France-Presse, Baghdad blast targeting Shiite pilgrims kills six, 12 May 2015
A bomb blast and two mortar rounds targeting Shiite worshippers marching to a Baghdad shrine killed six people Tuesday in the Iraqi capital, security and medical sources said. […]

➢ Agence France-Presse, Baghdad car bomb targeting pilgrims kills seven: police, 9 May 2015
A car bomb blast targeting Shiite pilgrims on an annual march to a Baghdad shrine killed at least seven people Saturday and wounded 20, security and medical sources said. […]

➢ Agence France-Presse, At least 13 killed in Baghdad car bombing: police, 2 May 2015
[…] Eleven people were killed and more than 40 wounded in a wave of car bomb attacks on Thursday and another nine were killed in two car bombings in Baghdad on Monday. The Islamic State jihadist group claimed it had carried out those attacks on Shiite districts of Baghdad to avenge attacks on displaced persons from a Sunni province. […]

➢ UN Human Rights Council (formerly UN Commission on Human Rights): Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Iraq in the light of abuses committed by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and associated groups [A/HRC/28/18], 27 March 2015
[…] II.   Patterns of violations
    A.   Violations perpetrated by ISIL

1. Attacks against religious and ethnic groups

16. The mission gathered reliable information about acts of violence perpetrated against civilians because of their affiliation or perceived affiliation to an ethnic or religious group. It is reasonable to conclude, in the light of the information gathered overall, that some of those incidents may constitute genocide. Other incidents may amount to crimes against humanity or war crimes. Ethnic and religious groups targeted by ISIL include Yezidis, Christians, Turkmen, Sabea-Mandeans, Kaka'e, Kurds and Shia. […]

(c) Attacks against Shia

23. Interviews conducted with victims and witnesses, corroborated by reliable sources, make it reasonable to conclude that attacks were perpetrated against Turkmen, Shabak and other Shia groups. […]

B. Individual criminal responsibility

76. The following crimes may have been committed. […]

• Crimes against humanity, such as murder, enslavement, deportation or forcible transfer of population, imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty, torture, rape, sexual slavery, sexual violence and persecution, committed as part of widespread and systematic attacks directed against civilian populations pursuant to, or in furtherance of, an organizational policy to commit such attacks. Information provided strongly suggests that ISIL has perpetrated some of those crimes against Christian, Shia and Yezidi communities.

➢ Agence France-Presse, Car bomb kills 8 in Shiite area of Baghdad: officials, 23 March 2015
A car bombing in the Shiite-majority Sadr City area of north Baghdad killed eight people and wounded more than 20 on Monday, Iraqi security and medical officials said. […]

➢ Agence France Press, Three killed in rare south Iraq bombing near port, 18 March 2015
A rare bombing in mainly Shiite southern Iraq killed at least three people and wounded four others near Umm Qasr port on Wednesday, police and a hospital source said. The bomb exploded at about 9:00 am (0600 GMT) in an area where trucks wait to enter the port near the city of Basra to pick up goods, hitting a vehicle belonging to a transport company. […]

➢ UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights/UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, February 2015
Summary […]
members of Iraq's diverse ethnic and religious communities, including Turkmen, Shabaks, Christians, Yezidi, Sabaeans, Kaka'e, Faili Kurds, Shi'ite Arab, and others have been intentionally and systematically targeted by ISIL and associated armed groups and subjected to gross human rights abuses, in what appears as a deliberate policy aimed at destroying, suppressing or expelling these communities permanently from areas under their control

[…] Violations and abuses committed by ISIL

Members of diverse ethnic and religious communities, including Turkmen, Shabak, Christians, Yezidi, Sabaeans, Kaka'e, Faili Kurds, Shi'a Arabs, and others, continued to suffer from a range of violations at the hands of ISIL and those associated with them, including executions and other targeted killings, abductions, rape and other forms of sexual and gender based violence perpetrated against women and children, slavery and trafficking of women and children, forced recruitment of children, destruction or desecration of places of religious or cultural significance, wanton destruction and looting of property, and denial of fundamental freedoms. ISIL targeting of these communities appears to be part of a systematic policy aimed at destroying, suppressing or expelling these communities permanently from areas under its control. […]

Attacks against ethnic and religious communities

As noted above, ISIL continues to subject members of diverse ethnic and religious communities to widespread and systematic violations in a policy that is apparently aimed at permanently suppressing, expelling or destroying these communities within areas of its control. […]

Attacks against Shi'a

ISIL continues to target Shi'a for abduction and execution – particularly members of ISF and persons perceived to be associated with the Government of Iraq. UNAMI/OHCHR continued to receive reports that captured Shi'a members of ISF were summarily killed by ISIL. […]

Similarly on 19 October ISIL claimed responsibility for an attack by an individual wearing an explosive vest outside a Shi'a mosque in Harthiya in eastern Baghdad, where people were attending a funeral. At least 15 civilians were killed and at least 24 wounded. […]

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Bombs Kill At Least 14 In Shi'ite Neighborhoods Of Baghdad, 9 February 2015](#)
Iraqi security officials and medical workers say at least 14 people were killed on February 9 by bomb attacks in Shi'ite neighborhoods of Baghdad. Police said a suicide bombing in Kadhamiyah, a mainly Shi'ite district in northern Baghdad, killed at least 13 people and wounded more than 30. The district is home to the Kadhamiyah Shrine, one of the holiest pilgrimage destinations for Shi'a. Hours after that attack, at least one person was killed and seven wounded by a bomb that exploded on a busy street in Baghdad's northeastern suburb of Husseiniyah. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the bombings. Sunni extremist groups such as the Islamic State regularly target Baghdad's Shi'ite neighborhoods. […]

Targeted attacks and violence against perceived government collaborators/ISIL collaborators

➤ [UN Security Council, Third report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 2169 (2014), 1 May 2015](#) [reporting period 02/02/2015-01/05/2015]
[…] III. Update on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the United Nations country team […]
C. Human rights developments and activities […]
48. Throughout the reporting period, ISIL and associated armed groups also continued to target persons and groups suspected of being allied with the Government of Iraq or opposed to their ideology, in particular members of the Iraqi security forces and police. […]

➤ [UN Human Rights Council (formerly UN Commission on Human Rights): Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Iraq in the light of abuses committed by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and associated groups [A/HRC/28/18], 27 March 2015](#)
[…] II.   Patterns of violations
    A.   Violations perpetrated by ISIL
    2.   Politically motivated attacks
29. Interviews with victims and witnesses, corroborated by reliable sources, have led the mission to reasonably conclude that there has been a pattern of attacks by members of ISIL against those it perceives to be affiliated with the Government. Targets include police officers, members of the Iraqi armed forces, the Awakening Movement, public servants, members of parliament, tribal and religious leaders, candidates in parliamentary and legislative elections and those who had publicly criticized, or were perceived to be opposed to, ISIL. Those violations were not based on perceived ethnic or religious identity but targeted Iraqis, usually Sunnis, deemed to be linked to the Government, or who refused to pledge allegiance to ISIL. […]

➤ [UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights/UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, February 2015](#)
[…] Violations and abuses committed by ISIL
ISIL has continued to commit systematic and widespread violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law in its areas of control. These may in amount some instances to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and possibly genocide. It has continued to target for abduction and killing of former members of ISF, public figures, persons perceived to be associated with the Government, as well as individuals whom it regards as posing a threat to its authority. […]
UNAMI has recorded at least 165 executions during the reporting period that have been carried out following sentences passed by the so-called "courts" in ISIL-controlled areas. […]

> [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, IS Militants Burn Three Iraqis Alive, 6 February 2015](#)
> Officials and eyewitnesses say Islamic State (IS) militants have burned at least three people alive in Iraq's western Anbar Province. The victims, residents of an area near the town of Hit, some 200 kilometers west of Baghdad, were suspected of informing Iraqi security forces about the militants' movements. Our correspondent says the militant group also accused the victims of encouraging people to join tribal forces who are fighting against IS. Anbar officials said in a statement that one of the victims was a former police officer. Residents of the area were reportedly forced to come to the site of the burning and watch the incident. [...]

> [UNHCR, UNHCR Position on Returns to Iraq, October 2014](#)
> […] Violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law […]
> 5. […] It has further been reported that individuals who oppose or are considered to be opposing ISIS and/or are considered to be collaborating with the Iraqi or Kurdish security forces have been targeted for killing, abduction and wanton destruction of property […]

> [Amnesty International, Ethnic cleansing on a historic scale: Islamic State's systematic targeting of minorities in Northern Iraq, 1 September 2014](#)
> Summary
> The group that calls itself the Islamic State (IS) has carried out ethnic cleansing on a historic scale in northern Iraq. Amnesty International has found that the IS has systematically targeted non-Arab and non-Sunni Muslim communities, killing or abducting hundreds, possibly thousands, and forcing more than 830,000 others to flee the areas it has captured since 10 June 2014. […]
> While the IS has mainly targeted the minority communities, many Arab Sunni Muslims known or believed to oppose the IS or to have worked with the government and security forces, or previously with the US army (present in Iraq until 2011), have likewise been forced to flee to avoid being killed, and their homes have been appropriated or destroyed […]

Targeted attacks and violence against those not adhering to Sharia law

> [UN Security Council, Third report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 2169 (2014), 1 May 2015](#) [reporting period 02/02/2015-01/05/2015]
> […] III. Update on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the United Nations country team […]
> C. Human rights developments and activities […]
> 47. ISIL and associated armed groups continue to subject civilians living in areas under their control to grave violations of their basic human rights, including enforcing compliance with its ideology through targeted killings, abductions and sentences handed down by "Shari'a courts". ISIL itself has published videos depicting people being subjected to a range of abhorrent punishments, including stoning, being pushed-off buildings, decapitation and crucifixion. […]

> [Minority Rights Group International/Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, No Place to Turn: Violence against women in the Iraq conflict, February 2015](#)
> Introduction […]
> 2 Assassinations and 'moral' crimes […]
> Militia imposition of moral codes
> Since 2003, the various militias patrolling the neighbourhoods of Iraq's cities have imposed their own dress codes in the areas they control in accordance with their ideologies. Many observers have noted that it is impossible for a woman to walk unveiled in some areas of Baghdad. University students have been harassed and intimidated at the gates of Baghdad, Mosul and Basra universities for not wearing the hijab. […]

> [UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights/UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, February 2015](#)

[…] Violations and abuses committed by ISIL […]
Denial of fundamental human rights and freedoms A
As mentioned earlier in this report, ISIL systematically enforced 'rules and codes of conduct' on civilians in the areas it controls in breach of a range of fundamental human rights and freedoms guaranteed by international and Iraqi law, including the right to life, right to a fair trial, and freedoms of religious belief, expression and opinion, assembly, association and movement. ISIL self-appointed 'courts' systematically imposed harsh penalties, including death, on those perceived to have transgressed its 'rules' (see above). Severe penalties, including corporal punishments, were also imposed for minor acts: 30 lashes and jail for smoking, 80 lashes for drinking, and the severing of hands or cross amputations for stealing. Music and CD stores have been banned. […]
Restrictions on the rights of women to move freely are mentioned above. Female students from the age of 10 are forced to cover their faces and hands when going to school or college. Schools are prohibited from teaching subjects that are not in accordance with ISIL's takfiri doctrines. […]

➢ UN News Centre, ISIL unlawful 'shari'a courts' meting out 'monstrous' punishments, UN warns, 20 January 2015
The United Nations human rights office today confirmed that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has established unlawful, so-called 'shari'a courts' in the territory under its control that have been carrying out cruel and inhuman punishments against men, women and children.
Those who are punished are accused of 'violating the group's extremist interpretations of Islamic shari'a law or for suspected disloyalty,' said Ravina Shamdasani, spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), at a Geneva briefing this afternoon.
"The ruthless murder of two men, who were thrown off the top of a building after having been accused of homosexual acts by a so-called court in Mosul, is another terrible example of the kind of monstrous disregard for human life that characterised ISIL's reign of terror over areas of Iraq that were under the group's control," she added.
Last week, ISIL also posted photos on the web of two men being 'crucified' after they were accused of banditry. The men were hung up by their arms and then shot dead. Photos were also posted of a woman being stoned to death, allegedly for adultery. […]

➢ UNHCR, UNHCR Position on Returns to Iraq, October 2014
[…] Violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law […]
5. The imposition by ISIS of its particular interpretation of Shari'a law in areas under its control raises serious concerns for the rights of women, members of religious minority groups and persons considered as not conforming to their strict interpretation of Islam. […]

3. Conditions in displacement in Iraq

Excerpt from Iraq 'CIG on security situation'
    a. Consideration of Issues […]
Are those at risk able to internally relocate within Iraq?
1.3.36 Internal relocation may be a viable option but only if the risk is not present in the place of relocation and it would not be unduly harsh to expect a person to do so.
1.3.37 In considering whether or not a person may internally relocate, decision makers must take into account the particular circumstances of the person, the nature of the threat and how far it would extend, and whether or not it would be unduly harsh to expect the person to relocate. This should include consideration of the age, gender, health, ethnicity, religion, financial circumstances and support network of the claimant, as well as the security, human rights and socio-economic conditions in the proposed area of relocation, including the claimant's ability to sustain themselves.
See Asylum Instruction, Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status, section 8, and Country Information and Guidance, Iraq, Internal relocation (and technical obstacles), December 2014 […]
Policy Summary […]
1.3.41 Internal relocation may be a viable option but only if the risk is not present in the place of relocation and it would not be unduly harsh to expect a person to do so. Each case will need to be considered on its individual facts.

The guidance provided in the 'CIG on security situation' with regards to internal relocation finds that it may be a "viable option" depending on the personal circumstances of the claimant and an assessment of the reasonableness of internal relocation (see highlighted text above). However, the 'CIG on security situation' contains extremely limited relevant COI for such an assessment; such COI is only included in section '2.4 Displacement', referring to the number and location of IDPs in Iraq, and in section '2.5 Sectarianism', referring to the increase in sectarian divisions in Iraq. The 'CIG on security situation' also refers to the December 2014 'CIG on internal relocation' for further information. Turning to the CIG on 'internal relocation':

Excerpt from Iraq 'CIG on internal relocation'
1.3 Consideration of Issues […]
Is it reasonable for Iraqi nationals to relocate to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq?
1.3.41 The case law of MK (documents – relocation) Iraq CG [2012] UKUT 126 (IAC), 25 April 2012 ('MK Iraq') found that entry and residence to KRG can be effected by any Iraqi national with a CSID, INC and PDS, after registration with the Asayish (local security office). An Arab may need a sponsor; a Kurd will not. In the case of HM and others (Article 15(c)) Iraq CG [2012] UKUT 00409(IAC), 13 November 2012 ('HM2 Iraq'), the Upper Tribunal found that the evidence presented did not warrant a departure from its conclusions on internal relocation alternatives in the KRG.
1.3.42 However since these determinations were promulgated, Iraq has experienced significant civil unrest and displacement, following widespread territorial losses to nonstate armed groups, notably ISIL. To consider the reasonableness of internal relocation, decision makers must refer to the latest country facts and guidance. Decision makers are reminded to refer to the very latest country information available. See Annex O: Sources of Country of Origin Information (COI)
1.3.43 In considering whether internal relocation to the KRI is reasonable, decision makers must assess the following:
Reports of internal displacement to KRI and sectarian divisions
Reports of restrictions on entry or residence, including societal objections
The practicalities of travel to KRI […]
Is it reasonable for Iraqi nationals to relocate to Baghdad or Governorates in the south?
1.3.62 The case law of MK (documents – relocation) Iraq CG [2012] UKUT 126 (IAC), 25 April 2012 ('MK Iraq') found that relocation to other areas of Iraq would not be unreasonable or unsafe, although cautioned that it would be most appropriate to relocate to areas where the returnee and host community shared a similar ethnic or religious background. In the case of HM and others (Article 15(c)) Iraq CG [2012] UKUT 00409(IAC), 13 November 2012 ('HM2 Iraq'), the Upper Tribunal found that the evidence presented

did not warrant a departure from its conclusions on internal relocation alternatives in central or southern Iraq.

1.3.63 However since these determinations were promulgated, Iraq has experienced significant civil unrest and displacement, following widespread territorial losses to nonstate armed groups, notably ISIL. To consider the reasonableness of internal relocation, decision makers must refer to the latest country facts and guidance. Decision makers are reminded to refer to the very latest country information available. See Annex O: Sources of Country of Origin Information (COI)

1.3.64 In considering whether internal relocation to Baghdad and Governorates in the south is reasonable, decision makers must assess the following country information:

Reports of internal displacement to Baghdad and the south and sectarian divisions

Reports of restrictions on entry or residence, including societal objections

The practicalities of travel to Baghdad and the south […]

The 'CIG on internal relocation' in turn refers to the reasonableness assessment of internal relocation (see highlighted text), but fails to actively engage with it and fails to include any COI on conditions in displacement. No sections in the 'CIG on internal relocation' specifically address the actual living conditions and situation in areas that returnees will be returned to in practice (e.g. Erbil, Baghdad). Instead it focuses on the number of IDPs, sectarian divisions, entry restrictions and the practicalities of travel – all part of the relevance assessment of internal relocation.

The humanitarian situation in Iraq and the situation for IDPs are not addressed in either of the CIGs under review, despite the fact that the situation for IDPs (outside of conflict regions) may provide a useful comparator for the situation of persons returned who must internally relocate to avoid the threat of persecution. Note that according to the letter by the British Embassy Baghdad, dated April 2012, included in the 'CIG on internal relocation' as Annex D, the government of Iraq does not consider returnees as IDPs.[2] UNHCR's position is that "Some refugee returnees also find themselves displaced. Returnees, whether refugees or IDPs, also face problems related to the lack of basic services and documentation".[3]

The UNHCR Guidelines on 'Internal Flight or Relocation Alternative' set out the two main analyses that must be undertaken in order to assess whether there is a relocation possibility, which it is useful to base issues for COI research on:

➢ UNHCR, Guidelines on International Protection No. 4: "Internal Flight or Relocation Alternative" Within the Context of Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 23 July 2003

I. The Relevance Analysis

a) Is the area of relocation practically, safely, and legally accessible to the individual? If any of these conditions is not met, consideration of an alternative location within the country would not be relevant.

b) Is the agent of persecution the State? National authorities are presumed to act throughout the country. If they are the feared persecutors, there is a presumption in principle that an internal flight or relocation alternative is not available.

c) Is the agent of persecution a non-State agent? Where there is a risk that the non-State actor will persecute the claimant in the proposed area, then the area will not be an internal flight or relocation alternative. This finding will depend on a determination of whether the persecutor is likely to pursue the claimant to the area and whether State protection from the harm feared is available there

d) Would the claimant be exposed to a risk of being persecuted or other serious harm upon relocation? This would include the original or any new form of persecution or other serious harm in the area of relocation

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[2] UK Home Office, *Country Information and Guidance, Iraq: Internal relocation (and technical obstacles)*, 24 December 2014, Annex D, para 16

[3] UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2013 Update: Iraq*, Undated, The needs, page 152 [last accessed: 03/06/2015]

II. The Reasonableness Analysis
a) Can the claimant, in the context of the country concerned, lead a relatively normal life without facing undue hardship? If not, it would not be reasonable to expect the person to move there.

Individualised research specific to a claimant's profile and to the proposed place of internal relocation is required, however the following provides an indication of the relevant issues that need to be addressed in order to follow UNHCR's approach in assessing the possibility of internal relocation within Iraq, together with some suggested sources.

Note that this commentary does not engage with the information included in the 'CIG on internal relocation' that might assist in the relevance assessment of internal relocation as this relates mainly to whether and what kind of documentation is required to enter the country and specific governorates in Iraq. Such information is based on letters or other forms of communication received from UNHCR and the British Embassy in Baghdad, which are beyond the scope of this commentary to verify and authenticate, particularly as information in the public domain is extremely limited on these kinds of specific issues. However, additional illustrative, non-exhaustive COI found in the public domain on entry restrictions imposed by Iraqi governorates including the Kurdistan Region of Iraq has been included the *restrictions on entry* section below.

I. The Relevance Analysis
a) Is the area of relocation practically, safely, and legally accessible to the individual? If any of these conditions is not met, consideration of an alternative location within the country would not be relevant

Following on from the above, COI research is required on:

- Restrictions on entering the proposed site of internal relocation: e.g. the existence of checkpoints and curfews, requirements for legal access to governorates and restrictions on permanently residing in the proposed site of internal relocation
- Whether particular profiles are denied entry to certain governorates
- Security situation in the proposed site of internal relocation
- Security situation on route to the proposed site of internal relocation

For suggested sources to consult when researching the security situation in a particular area of relocation see the database in the Appendix '*Useful sources to consult on the security situation in Iraq*'.

I. The Relevance Analysis
b) Is the agent of persecution the State? National authorities are presumed to act throughout the country. If they are the feared persecutors, there is a presumption in principle that an internal flight or relocation alternative is not available.
Not relevant for the profiles addressed above, as the state is not the agent of persecution.

I. The Relevance Analysis
c) Is the agent of persecution a non-State agent? Where there is a risk that the non-State actor will persecute the claimant in the proposed area, then the area will not be an internal flight or relocation alternative. This finding will depend on a determination of whether the persecutor is likely to pursue the claimant to the area and whether State protection from the harm feared is available there.

In order to assess whether internal relocation is a possibility to escape the risk of persecution from a particular (and known) armed group, information is required on the following issues:

- Origins and ideology
- Affiliates
- Strength and regions of operation
- Recent activities and targets of attacks

It is imperative to conduct up-to-date COI research addressing the threat and reach of a particular armed group. A database of useful sources to consult on the security situation in Iraq to assist in case specific research on a particular location, as well as on a particular armed group, has been included in the Appendix '*Useful sources to consult on the security situation in Iraq*'.

Where the non-state agent of persecution is an individual, for example a family member, evidence is required on their motivation and their ability to pursue the claimant. This is likely to be highly individualised evidence, rather than published country information, unless the individual in question has a public profile.

I. The Relevance Analysis
d) Would the claimant be exposed to a risk of being persecuted or other serious harm upon relocation? This would include the original or any new form of persecution or other serious harm in the area of relocation.

In addition to researching the risk of harm arising from a claimant's particular profile, it will be necessary to research any new human rights abuses that might affect the claimant in the proposed new area of relocation based on their personal circumstances, for example arising from their gender, ethnicity, religion, political opinion etc . It may be the case that IDPs are particularly vulnerable to abuse.

II. The Reasonableness Analysis
a) Can the claimant, in the context of the country concerned, lead a relatively normal life without facing undue hardship? If not, it would not be reasonable to expect the person to move there.

According to the UNHCR Guidelines on Internal Relocation, on this point it is necessary to assess (emphasis added):

➢ UNHCR, Guidelines on International Protection No. 4: "Internal Flight or Relocation Alternative" Within the Context of Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 23 July 2003
- **The applicant's personal circumstances** (Of relevance in making this assessment are factors such as age, sex, health, disability, family situation and relationships, social or other vulnerabilities, ethnic, cultural or religious considerations, political and social links and compatibility, language abilities, educational, professional and work background and opportunities, and any past persecution and its psychological effects. In particular, lack of ethnic or other cultural ties may result in isolation of the individual and even discrimination in communities where close ties of this kind are a dominant feature of daily life. Factors which may not on their own preclude relocation may do so when their cumulative effect is taken into account. Depending on individual circumstances, those factors capable of ensuring the material and psychological well-being of the person, such as the presence of family members or other close social links in the proposed area, may be more important than others)

- **The existence of past persecution** (Psychological trauma arising out of past persecution may be relevant in determining whether it is reasonable to expect the claimant to relocate in the proposed area. The provision of psychological assessments attesting to the likelihood of further psychological trauma upon return would militate against finding that relocation to the area is a reasonable alternative)
- **Safety and security, respect for human rights**
- **Possibility for economic survival** (If the situation is such that the claimant will be unable to earn a living or to access accommodation, or where medical care cannot be provided or is clearly inadequate, the area may not be a reasonable alternative. It would be unreasonable, including from a human rights perspective, to expect a person to relocate to face economic destitution or existence below at least an adequate level of subsistence)

For suggested sources to consult when researching the humanitarian situation in a particular area of relocation see the sources database in the Appendix '*Useful sources to consult on the humanitarian situation in Iraq*'. It may also be relevant to research the provision of mental health treatment and psychological support.

The following sections presents illustrative, non-exhaustive COI available in the public domain focusing on the past six months on the humanitarian situation for returnees/IDPs in central/southern Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq as they are regarded as the main places of likely return; on the humanitarian situation faced by women and children; and restrictions on entry:

- o *Humanitarian situation in central/southern Iraq*
- o *Humanitarian situation in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq*
- o *Conditions in displacement for women and children*
- o *Restrictions on entry*

Humanitarian situation in central/southern Iraq

➢ UNHCR, UNHCR IDP Operational Update 1-15 April 2015, 12 May 2015
[…] Operational Context […]
Key protection concerns affecting IDP returnees across Iraq include the destruction of property, contamination by explosive remnants of the conflict, limited availability of food and non-food items, lost documentation, safety of women and children due to the presence of militias, as well as access to health services, clean water and education. […]
CAMP
Achievements and Impact […]
In Missan Camp, Missan Governorate, women have reportedly been lacking transportation options and have thus been unable to travel to markets to buy food and supplies. Families indicated they did not wish to remain in the camp due to the heat. Needs for the camp include a fence, summarization materials, education support and livelihood activities.
In the Basra Collective Center, students have been unable to attend school due to the lack of electricity and air conditioning. […]

➢ IRIN, Iraq aid cuts due to funding shortages, 6 May 2015
Humanitarian crises around the world are struggling for money, but Iraq – where some 2.7 million people have been internally displaced in the last 17 months – is at the bottom of the pile, having received just eight percent of its 2015 funding needs.
Aid agencies say their already "bare-boned" response is facing further cutbacks: food parcels are shrinking, outreach programmes are being chopped, and planned water, sanitation and education projects are under threat. […]
According to the latest figures published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 445,680 families – approximately 2.7 million people – have fled their homes since January 2014.

A report published on Wednesday by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) in Geneva estimates Iraq's total IDP caseload (including historic cases dating back to previous waves of conflict) is closer to 3.4 million.

Last month alone, more than 100,000 people fled the city of Ramadi after the government announced a new military offensive against so-called Islamic State militants in the province of Anbar. […]

"We are in a terrible state. We basically only have enough food until June and we have already begun cutting food distributions," said Jane Pearce, director of the World Food Programme (WFP) mission in Iraq. As well as reducing food allocations by making parcel distribution bi-monthly instead of monthly, WFP has also had to draw down loans on all outstanding donor pledges as it has already exhausted all its credit, Pearce said. […]

➢ OCHA, Iraq Crisis Situation Report No. 42 (29 April – 5 May 2015), 5 May 2015

[…] Food Security

Needs […]

Priority food supply needs for new and existing IDPs, as well as returnees, continue in Anbar Governorate (Falluja, Haditha, Rutba, Ramadi and Ka'im districts), Salah al-Din Governorate (Tikrit, Baiji and Samarra districts), Kirkuk Governorate (Kirkuk City), Diyala Governorate (Aliawa and Al-Wand IDP camps in Khanaqin District and the Saad IDP camp in Ba'quba District), Ninewa Governorate (Telafar and Sinjar districts) and Baghdad Governorate (Baghdad City, Resafa, Abu Ghraib, and Tarmia districts).

⍰ Food supply needs persist for IDPs in the southern governorates of Qadissiya (Diwaniya District), Muthanna Governorate, as well as Najaf, Kerbala, Thi-Qar and Missan. […]

Gaps and Constraints […]

In Muthanna Governorate IDPs are not yet listed in the Ministry of Trade Public Distribution System (PDS) electronic list, and therefore are not able to receive their food packages. […]

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene […]

Needs […]

A number of IDP collective centres and temporary camps in Baghdad Governorate lack basic WASH services. The Al Takiya IDP Camp requires garbage collection and sewage disposal services. Checkpoint 75 requires some additional water supply. 300 families in mosques and unfinished buildings in Ghazalia Quarter require hygiene items, NFIs, and showers. 2,600 families in Al-Nasir Wassalam require sustainable access to safe drinking water. A new camp being constructed for 500 families requires water trucking, jerry cans, hygiene kits and promotion.

⍰ In Najaf Governorate, over 180 IDP families require water tanks, hygiene items, showers, garbage bags and containers. […]

➢ UN Security Council, Third report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 2169 (2014), 1 May 2015 [reporting period 02/02/2015-01/05/2015]

[…] III. Update on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the United Nations country team […]

E. Humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and development

59. More than five million people are estimated to require humanitarian assistance in Iraq, including 2.6 million internally displaced persons living in 2,900 locations. Nearly half of all displaced are children. Close to 30 per cent of displaced households are in critical situations, housed in abandoned or unfinished buildings, makeshift structures, schools and mosques; only 9 per cent are living in camps. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi families have opened their homes to the displaced. As the crisis continues into a second year, conditions for these families are rapidly worsening. Food insecurity has doubled during the reporting period, impacting an estimated 4.4 million Iraqis. In the Kurdistan region, the overall poverty rate has doubled. The Syrian refugee population in Iraq has continued to increase, with 150 to 200 persons arriving in Iraq per day. UNHCR reports that 247,861 refugees are currently seeking safety in Iraq, of which 93,000 live within the 10 camps across the Kurdistan Region. […]

➢ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matric: DTM Round XX May 2015, May 2015

[…] From the start of January 2014 through 7 May 2015, the DTM identified 2,966,844 internally displaced individuals (494,474 families), dispersed across 101 districts and 3,225 distinct locations in Iraq. […]
Overview by geographic location
Key Points
Seven out of the eighteen Iraqi governorates host more than 80% of the total identified IDP population, or about 2,392,000 individuals: Baghdad (16%), Anbar (16%), Dahuk (15%), Kirkuk (13%), Erbil (8%), Ninewa (6%) and Sulaymaniyah (6%). […]
• Internal displacement in Anbar and Baghdad, or the volume of the IDP population within the governorates of Anbar and Baghdad, experienced a massive increase during the reporting period, 15% and 10% respectively; this is mainly due to the ongoing clashes in Ramadi. […]
Overview by shelter arrangements
Key points
66% (1,957,000 individuals) of the identified displaced population are housed in private settings.
• In particular, host families currently account for 27% of IDPs in private settings, or about 800,000 individuals, mainly in the governorates of Anbar (40%) and Baghdad (28%). The remaining 39% living in private settings are currently paying for accommodation in rented houses or hotels.
• Critical shelters currently host 22% of the identified population, or about 650,000 individuals. Among those, about 439,000 live in very critical conditions in unfinished building and informal settlements. […]

- [Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, The overlooked humanitarian crisis in Iraq: The need to address disparities, 28 April 2015](#)
  […] We don't hear much about the humanitarian fallout from the current crisis in Iraq, but Iraq now has one of the highest populations of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the world. Since the latest crisis started in January 2014, 2.6 million people have been displaced— a figure that is in addition to the over 1 million still displaced from the 2006- 2008 period of sectarian conflict. Iraq is also hosting a quarter of a million Syrian refugees. It is time not only to pay attention to the humanitarian crisis in Iraq but also to address the disparities in present humanitarian operations.
  The first disparity is that of funding for humanitarian operations in Iraq. Last year, when the crisis began, Saudi Arabia gave $500 million to the UN to assist the IDPs, but that money ran out in March 2015 forcing agencies to cut programs The UN's revised Iraq Strategic Response Plan appeals for $2.2 billion for 2014-15. So far only 5 percent has been received. In comparison, the UN's $8 billion appeal for Syria is now 15 percent funded. While both crises need further funding, it appears that Iraq's massive displacement crisis is being overshadowed by Syria. Like Syria, Iraq has been designated by the UN as a Level 3 emergency (the highest level), but this has not translated into urgently-needed funding. In fact, there is a risk that this could be the first level 3 crisis in the world to run out of money. .
  A second disparity is between aid for refugees and for IDPs. When Syrian refugees started arriving in the Kurdish region of Iraq three years ago, there was more attention to their needs than is now being paid to the needs of a far larger number of Iraqi IDPs. As one of us directly observed in Northern Iraq, Syrian refugee camps in Iraq are some of the better refugee camps in the world; IDP camps in Iraq (some of which are only a few minutes' drive from a refugee camp) are among the worst. While it's true that the refugee camps have been there longer and that the refugees have invested some of their own resources to improve their camps, there has still been far more attention paid to the refugees than to the IDPs. This disparity of treatment between refugees and IDPs – particularly evident when they are living in proximity to one another—is a global phenomenon which is causing tension in Iraq. Humanitarian principles call for assistance solely on the basis of need – not on which 'category' a person falls in.
  A third global disparity also evident in Iraq is the disproportionate attention given to those IDPs and refugees who live in camps in comparison with the larger numbers living on their own. Despite UNHCR's July 2014 Alternatives to Camps policy, the less than 10 percent of IDPs, and 40 percent of refugees who live in camps get much more attention and organized assistance than the vast majority who live outside of camps. This is not only inequitable, but further serves to pressure the displaced populations to move to camps even though living conditions in many camps are inadequate, and there are restrictions to freedom of movement and access to livelihood opportunities. Moreover, the communities that host refugees and IDPs are usually given short shrift by humanitarian agencies and by donors. And yet these communities, often poor communities, are directly impacted by the arrival of large numbers of displaced people. Public services come under strain, rental costs increase, and wages decline. The hospitality of receiving

communities is legendary but disparities in aid create tensions within communities and more community tensions are the last things Iraq needs. .

The humanitarian crisis in Iraq is likely to get much worse in 2015. For example, there are presently reports that if/when fighting starts in Mosul, up to 500,000 more people could flee. And it's not clear where they will be able to go and whether they will receive the assistance they need. The situation is so dire that some Iraqis have crossed into Syria in search of security and assistance. It sounds unbelievable for anyone to go to Syria in search of safety, but that's how bad things have become. […]

- Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Forced to seek shelter in Baghdad's mosques, Ramadi's displaced say they feel abandoned, 20 April 2015
  The displaced persons crisis in the capital, Baghdad, is worsening with civil society institutions lacking the resources to cope with the thousands of Iraqi families displaced from their homes in the past several days, Iraqi media are reporting.
  The United Nations said on April 19 that more than 90,000 people fled their homes in Anbar in the last few days, as Islamic State (IS) militants advance in the province, particularly in the provincial capital of Ramadi, 60 miles west of Baghdad.
  With the displaced persons finding shelter as best they can in Baghdad's mosques, some are blaming the Iraqi central government for their plight, saying that they feel abandoned. […]
  Umm Ahmed said that living conditions for her and her family are "dire" and that everyday things such as bathing have become luxuries. […]

- UN News Centre, Situation 'very worrying' for displaced families from Iraq's Anbar province, UN officials warn, 24 February 2015
  […] Across central Iraq, the internal displacement of Iraqi citizens continues, often in areas where aid agencies have limited access. The ongoing conflict in the Anbar Governorate is causing fresh displacement near the cities of Al Baghdadi, Haditha, Ramadi and Fallujah. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) in these areas are reported to be in urgent need of fuel, food and medicine, with growing shortages of basic food items and prices spiralling. […]
  As it stands now, 2.25 million Iraqis are estimated to have been displaced since January 2014. Over 380,000 are currently displaced within the Anbar Governorate. […]

- UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights/UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, February 2015
  […] Impact of the conflict on civilians […]
  Conflict-related displacement of civilians
  As of 10 December 2014, over two million persons have been displaced within Iraq; comprising some 334,011 families. […]
  There were an estimated 904,170 individuals, 45 per cent of the total number of IDPs in the central region, including the governorates of Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkurk, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din, and 153,630 individuals, or 8 per cent of the IDP population, in the governorates of southern Iraq. The governorates with the highest number of people who have fled their homes continued to be Ninewa with 943,962 individuals displaced, and Anbar with 540,732 individuals displaced. In a recent wave of displacement from the sub-district of al-Alam in Salah al-Din, at least 6,300 individuals sought refuge in the neighboring Kirkuk governorate and Samarra district. Ongoing clashes continue to trigger new movement of IDPs. […]
  UNAMI/OHCHR received reports from the southern governorates, where there are smaller concentrations of IDPs that access to basic services by IDPS and strains on the limited resources of host communities remained of concern. […]

- Minority Rights Group International/Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, No Place to Turn: Violence against women in the Iraq conflict, February 2015
  […] Other conflict-related mortality factors […]
  In addition to civilians who have been killed as a direct result of violent conflict, as reflected in the numbers above, many more have died from the after-effects of violence and displacement, including failure of essential services, hunger, dehydration, disease, and lack of medicines or basic supplies.

(Estimating the extent of such wider conflict-related mortality has proved controversial and is not attemped in this report.)

Health care services have been disrupted in the conflict zones due to physical damage to infrastructure, supply chain interruptions, fuel shortages, and problems retaining staff. According to the World Health Organization, over 50 per cent of specialized health care staff have fled the governorates of Anbar, Diyala, Ninewa, and Salahuddin since June 2014. […]

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), approximately 2.1 million Iraqis have been displaced due to the conflict in 2014 alone. […]

- ➤ Minority Rights Group, Between the Millstones: The State of Iraq's Minorities Since the Fall of Mosul, February 2015

Key findings […]

The current situation for the millions of displaced persons in Iraq, many of whom belong to minority groups, is characterized by deteriorating humanitarian conditions in camps, abandoned buildings and informal settlements. The lack of an effective response from the government, combined with limited resources from international agencies, has left many without adequate food, water, health care, shelter and other necessities, with women and children especially vulnerable. […]

6 The current situation of internally displaced minorities […]

The humanitarian response

International standards, especially the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, note that 'national authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction', and overall responsibility for addressing their needs rests with the federal government and the KRG, with the assistance of international humanitarian organizations and other appropriate actors. However, due to the chaos inherent to conflict situations, disorganization within state structures and the failure to lay out an integrated national strategy, combined with a slow-starting relief effort, roles and responsibilities among domestic and international agencies have been confused, disjointed and less effective. With Resolution 328, the Iraqi government established the Supreme Committee for Displaced Persons in July 2014, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Saleh alMutlaq. The committee includes representatives from other Iraqi government ministries and was intended to provide assistance for the displaced as quickly as possible, overriding bureaucratic procedures. The committee established an executive committee with operations centres in the Iraqi Kurdish Region, Kirkuk, and other areas, as well as IQD 1 trillion (US$819 million) in promised funding. Nevertheless, assistance delivery has been undermined by insecurity and administrative hurdles, such as delays in NGOs obtaining clearances from Iraqi and Kurdish authorities to distribute humanitarian aid. Securing access to many displaced communities is also very difficult as large parts of Iraq are outside government control. In places where humanitarian assistance is most needed, unexploded ordnance and other impacts threaten assistance. The UN estimates that in total 2.2 million Iraqis in need are living in areas under ISIS control. Funding shortages remain a central problem for the humanitarian response. OCHA has reported that a number of the governorates in Iraq (Missan, Wassit and Thi-Qar) have already capped their budgets and cannot as a result provide sufficient water, health and sanitation for displaced people. However, fraud and the misallocation of funds are also major issues. According to one senior government official interviewed in Baghdad, corruption remains an intrinsic feature of both the Iraqi and Kurdish political and military systems, and has contributed to undermining the international humanitarian response. Some accusations focus on the IQD 1 million (roughly US$850) cash grant available for each family displaced by the ISIS advance, with allegations of widespread fraud among staff. Several accounts confirmed that cash assistance has been diverted, with numerous families finding on arrival at distribution points that their money had already been collected. Some officials have requested bribes from IDPs to receive their grant, and many families have complied. Reportedly, a second round of cash grants is being considered. There are also reports of price gouging and businesses inflating prices on supplies provided by the government. […]

In October 2014, the Iraqi Council of Representatives Migration and Displaced Persons Committee charged the Iraqi government's High Committee for Internally Displaced Persons with defrauding displaced families in October 2014. Yezidi people, in particular, have faced discrimination and distrust on the part of Kurdish and Iraqi authorities. […]

The international community has also played a major role in the distribution of humanitarian assistance to the displaced. OCHA's most recent figures related to the 2014/2015 Strategic Response Plan for Iraq,

released on 10 February 2015, identifies US$2,230.3 billion in support requirements from 46 UN agencies and humanitarian assistance providers, though the actual funding committed amounted to only US$814.6 million, covering just 36.5 per cent of identified support requirements. The plan notes that while the government has taken the lead in providing some assistance, 'details on the use of … funds remain unclear … and important measures by the Government still must be taken'. To coordinate the humanitarian response, OCHA has organized clusters of relevant UN bodies and agencies, humanitarian NGOs and other partners to tackle specific issues. […]

Without clarity of vision and clear bureaucratic structures, as well as an effective police force or legal system, it is increasingly difficult to implement state-wide policies, including the management of refugees and IDPs. While the involvement of many international organizations could offer some help with the refugee and IDP problem, UNHCR – arguably the most significant international actor involved in the Iraqi crisis – has already stated that its activities will concentrate primarily on the situation of refugees, in line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which stipulate that IDPs are the responsibility of the state. It has also struggled to raise sufficient funds, having failed to secure over half of the total US$564.3 million funding that it deemed necessary to implement its full crisis response plan in Iraq. While UNHCR has declared that it will advocate for the GoI and KRG to fulfil their international legal obligations in protecting the IDP population, severe governance challenges and lack of collaboration between the GoI and KRG, inter alia, obstruct the practical implementation of any crisis response plan. This means that on the ground, displaced families find themselves caught between the competing claims of local officials and UNHCR representatives that primary responsibility for the management of IDP camps falls to the international community or national authorities, respectively. This situation is made worse by discrimination towards certain minority groups. […]

Conditions of IDP camps and informal settlements […]

Those who do not live in camps have found shelter in schools, abandoned buildings and under overpasses and bridges, living in squalid conditions without medical care. In addition, there are reports of as many as 200 Christians living in holes in the ground, which also poses severe health risks. With many IDPs deeply traumatized and lacking access to appropriate psychological care, suicides have been reported.217

Insecurity is a major contributor to the humanitarian crisis in Iraq. Many of the areas where IDPs have sought shelter are unprotected or located in disputed territory. The decapitation of abducted international aid workers from Syria and the attack on a UN convoy near Baghdad airport in November 2014 illustrate the threat posed to the humanitarian response and to IDPs themselves. In order to reach those in need of urgent assistance in ISIS occupied territory, according to Rudaw Media Network, the World Health Organization has launched an initiative that involves subcontracting local truckers to bring vital emergency aid to those in need in insecure locations. It remains to be seen whether this strategy is effective in relieving the suffering of those in territories under ISIS control.

Access to food and water

Providing enough food and water for the millions of displaced people in Iraq has presented many difficulties, made worse by the degradation and destruction of civilian infrastructure and public services by both ISIS and ISF forces. The inability to provide many displaced minority members with sufficient food and water has resulted in numerous deaths from dehydration and overheating. In Ninewa and Tal Afar, a large number of elderly people were reported to have died from dehydration and hunger. Water supplies were cut off in these ISIS occupied areas and many IDPs were forced to drink contaminated well water. The TRF reports that up to 20 pregnant women have lost their babies due to lack of food and medical care, while a number of women and children died due to intense heat and dehydration. Around 40 Yezidi children are reported to have died due to dehydration and overheating while fleeing ISIS in Sinjar. Though there have been significant efforts to provide sufficient food and access to clean water by the Iraqi government and various humanitarian organizations, significant shortfalls remain. At the end of 2014, only 946,754 out of 3.5 million targeted had sufficient access to clean water. Local NGOs, IDPs, as well as politicians in Erbil and Baghdad interviewed for this report confirmed that food and water assistance is being delivered daily, but in inadequate amounts.

Health and sanitation

Provision of adequate health and sanitation services to IDPs in camps and in temporary shelters has also proven to be difficult. Many IDPs suffer from unsanitary conditions and from a lack of emergency medical treatment. Security concerns have hampered operations, particularly in the Ninewa, Anbar, Kirkuk, Salah al-Din and Diyala governorates. The use of hospitals as bases by ISIS forces, and damage from rocket attacks and air strikes, has undermined the health infrastructure in affected areas.

Shelter and winterization assistance

The provision of adequate shelter became an urgent issue for tens of thousands of displaced minority members, particularly during winter. While the number of camps is gradually being expanded, many IDPs, particularly Yezidis, have been forced to take shelter in schools, abandoned buildings, below overpasses or elsewhere. In addition, the tents procured early in the crisis were not heavy-duty winter tents and are thus inadequate. As of January 2015, almost 650,000 IDPs were living in 'critical shelter arrangements', concentrated in Dohuk and Anbar. […]

Many Assyrian IDPs have sought shelter with friends or relatives, but live in cramped conditions with inadequate supplies of food, water, fuel and blankets. The lack of adequate heating was especially pronounced during the onset of winter towards the end of 2014, with OCHA reporting in November that 77 per cent of people living in unfinished buildings, 84 per cent of those in tents and 43 per cent hosted by friends and family lacked any source of heating.

Employment and education

The vast majority of displaced minority members in Iraq were forced to leave behind their homes, jobs and livelihoods as they fled the advance of ISIS. As there are few opportunities for employment in the camps and temporary shelters, many are now dependent on humanitarian assistance from the local or national authorities, UN agencies and their partners. Discriminatory attitudes towards ethnic and religious minorities regarding employment were evident even before the current crisis, including in the public sector. Similarly, even before the outbreak of the current crisis, education provision in Iraq was under-resourced and discriminatory for children from religious and ethnic minorities. Though children have the right to be educated in their mother tongue under the Iraqi Constitution of 2005, this has not been respected. […]

Provision of education in the children's native tongue is also under-resourced in Iraq: many Turkmen communities, for example, have struggled to access education in their own language. In this context – with an estimated three quarters (472,000) of young IDPs in need of educational services – the risk of children from minority groups missing out on an education is especially acute. Despite efforts by local, regional and national governments in Iraq, as well as the UN and its partners, the response so far has been insufficient. […]

➢ [UNHCR, UNHCR Position on Returns to Iraq, October 2014](#)

[…] Humanitarian Situation

16. As a result of conflict, displacement and interruption of services due to siege tactics and attacks against vital infrastructure, humanitarian needs have escalated rapidly, adding to the already existing significant humanitarian needs in Iraq, including those of the over 200,000 Syrian refugees who sought refuge in Iraq, mostly in the Kurdistan Region. More than 5 million people are currently in need of humanitarian assistance across Iraq. This contrasts with only 1.5 million people that are currently reached by humanitarian actors. Given the scale and complexity of the humanitarian crisis, the UN, on 12 August 2014, declared a "Level 3 Emergency" for Iraq, the highest-level emergency designation.

17. The humanitarian situation of populations living in conflict areas is of particular concern. They remain without, or with severely limited access to basic services, food and other commodities and are largely inaccessible for international organizations on account of security, bureaucratic and political restrictions. Several key supply routes have reportedly also been blocked and authorities are said to have restricted humanitarian access for administrative reasons or across conflict lines in a number of instances. Information on the current situation in these areas is limited. Armed groups have reportedly targeted basic services and utilities such as water networks and power grids. In many areas the health infrastructure and access to health services have been disrupted due to the conflict, a situation further compounded by the lack of supplies, electricity and water and reported shortages in medical personnel as many have fled.

18. Across the country, the disruption of the Public Distribution System (PDS) for food, which remains the main source of food for the poorest Iraqis, and the destruction and confiscation of agricultural produce, disruptions of markets, widespread insecurity and massive displacement have negatively impacted on the ability of civilians to access food. Throughout the country, food security is further threatened as the May/June cereal harvest was compromised in key cereal production areas affected by conflict, such as Ninewa and Salah Al-Din governorates. Recent displacement in Al-Anbar threatens to disrupt the October/November wheat planting season. According to Mohamed Diab, Director of WFP's Regional Bureau for the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Europe, "[T]he food security situation in Iraq is alarming – the worst that the country has witnessed since the sanctions in the early 1990s."

19. In areas of displacement, local authorities and communities are overstretched and unable to provide all IDPs with basic services and public infrastructure, many of whom arrived with little more than the clothes on their backs and with limited financial resources to support themselves. Adequate shelter is a key concern. The primary shelter arrangement for displaced populations is to stay with host communities. However, as the availability of housing to host displaced populations has become drastically limited due to the massive displacement crisis, and the cost of accommodation has significantly increased, many newly displaced populations had to occupy unfinished or abandoned buildings, schools, mosques and churches. Others are living in the open in substandard living conditions, exposing them to significant health risks during the forthcoming winter season. Inadequate housing has reportedly resulted in secondary displacement. There are concerns that IDPs in Kerbala and Najef, who are currently sheltering in mosques and pilgrim guesthouses, may be at risk of eviction ahead of forthcoming religious festivals. Living in extremely overcrowded conditions and with limited or no privacy gives rise to protection concerns, including harassment and all forms of exploitation, especially for women and children. A number of camps are in use or are under rehabilitation or construction, although not all meet minimum standards or lack funding or camp management. The establishment of additional camps is under consideration. Significant numbers of schools continue to accommodate IDPs, are occupied by armed groups or have been damaged or destroyed as a result of the conflict.

20. In areas hosting IDPs, the conflict has considerably delayed the start of the academic school year, especially in central Iraq and in Dahuk governorate. Prolonged delays potentially create resentment among the host communities towards the presence of IDPs. Overcrowding, language barriers and differences in curriculum (in the Kurdistan Region) as well as registration complexities further hamper displaced children's access to education. Another challenge affecting the education system is the fact that over half of Iraq's 95,000 teachers have reportedly been displaced. Large numbers of IDPs are in critical need of food assistance. Humanitarian actors have expressed concern that IDPs sheltering in open areas, unfinished buildings, schools, and other temporary accommodations are in urgent need of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) assistance.

21. Local health services are reported to be overstretched due to high numbers of IDP arrivals and primary healthcare clinics often lack sufficient amounts of essential and chronic illness drugs. IDPs living in unfinished buildings and the open are particularly hard to reach with health services. It was noted that the need for medical and psychosocial support among IDPs was significant as many had witnessed traumatic events.

22. Lacking an income and running out of savings, if any, IDPs are at risk of renewed displacement. Reports indicate that IDPs had to return to their governorate of origin or were secondarily displaced to other part of Iraq as they were unable to afford the high cost of living in the Kurdistan Region. IDPs face growing challenges to obtain or renew civil identification documentation such as passports, PDS ration cards and nationality certificates, as this would usually require them to return to their place of origin where the original records are maintained – a prospect that is not feasible for many at this current time. Special offices have been established in Baghdad and Najaf to provide document replacement services; however, IDPs in other parts of the country, especially the Kurdistan Region, face challenges to access these services, including high travel costs. IDPs without valid civil documentation may be unable to register with local authorities (in the Kurdistan Region) or the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM, in areas under control of the central government), thereby preventing them from regularizing their stay and thus limiting access to assistance and public services. There are reports of IDP identity documents being confiscated by authorities in order to control their movement. […]

Humanitarian situation in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

➤ [UNHCR, UNHCR IDP Operational Update 1-15 April 2015, 12 May 2015](#)
[…] Operational Context […]
NON-CAMP […]
Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps […]
IDP families throughout Iraq remain at risk of eviction, particularly in Zakho and Dohuk cities in the Dohuk Governorate. In Dohuk, the lack of fuel and competition over the purchase of firewood has caused increased tensions between IDPs and host communities. […]

➢ OCHA, Iraq Crisis Situation Report No. 42 (29 April – 5 May 2015), 5 May 2015
[…] Food Security
Needs […]
Food assistance is needed in Dahuk and Erbil governorates (Baharka and Harshm IDP camps). […]
[…] Protection […]
Gaps and Constraints […]
Armed groups remain near IDPs living in the Debagah stadium in Makmur District, Erbil Governorate, which makes it difficult to deliver assistance to these IDPs without compromising respect for humanitarian principles. […]
Health […]
Gaps and Constraints:
◌ Health services in the KR-I remain overburdened by the high number of IDPs. […]

➢ IOM Iraq, Displacement Tracking Matric: DTM Round XX May 2015, May 2015
[…] From the start of January 2014 through 7 May 2015, the DTM identified 2,966,844 internally displaced individuals (494,474 families), dispersed across 101 districts and 3,225 distinct locations in Iraq. […]
Overview by geographic location
Key Points
Seven out of the eighteen Iraqi governorates host more than 80% of the total identified IDP population, or about 2,392,000 individuals: Baghdad (16%), Anbar (16%), Dahuk (15%), Kirkuk (13%), Erbil (8%), Ninewa (6%) and Sulaymaniyah (6%).
• In total, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) hosts about 1,095,060 displaced indivisuals [sic] (182,510 families) which accounts for 37% of the overal [sic] displaced population […]

➢ IRIN, Iraqi Kurdistan nears breaking point, 20 March 2015
The pressure of hosting more than 1 million people displaced by militants from the group calling itself Islamic State (IS) on top of the 225,000 refugees from Syria is taking a devastating economic and social toll on Iraqi Kurdistan and increasing risks for the most vulnerable.
The population of the semi-autonomous region has grown by 28 percent in the space of 12 months, piling pressure on education and health services. Poverty in the region has more than doubled, according to the World Bank. With further military offensives planned against IS, there are fears that yet more people will seek safety in the region.
The scale of the influx has created significant competition for jobs, pushing down wages and household incomes across the board, while demand for water, electricity and waste management is outstripping supply.
Meanwhile, the falling price of oil has hit government revenues and a long-running budget row with the Federal authorities in Baghdad has halted fiscal transfers to the Kurdish capital Erbil – meaning public salaries have gone unpaid for months. […]
The majority of the displaced in Kurdistan live in grim conditions, without family or friends to host them or money for accommodation. Despite efforts to transfer the displaced into tented camps, many still live in informal settlements and on construction sites. […]
The scaling back of refuse collections and water supplies is already having an impact, with a number of camps reporting scabies outbreaks in recent weeks. The cold and snow of winter was hard enough for families, but as the heat of summer looms, so do new threats of water-borne diseases. […]
A new World Bank report assessing the impact of the influx of Syrian refugees and internally-displaced Iraqis on Kurdistan notes: "The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is facing a multifaceted and complex crisis compounding concurrent and mutually aggravating security, political, economic, and social risks." […]

➢ UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights/UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, February 2015
[…] Impact of the conflict on civilians […]
Conflict-related displacement of civilians […]
The KR-I continued to host the largest number of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) with an estimated 946,266 individuals, or 47 per cent of the total IDP population within Iraq, spread across the three Kurdish governorates of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniya. […]

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the United Nations have been facing a serious funding shortfall for the humanitarian response. IDPs in some areas have reported being in urgent need of blankets, heaters, food, and other non-food items. In some camps, IDPs reported that food supplies were running low and they were forced to buy provisions. This has created frustrations among many IDPs, which, on 30 November resulted in a demonstration at the Shariya IDP camp in the Dohuk governorate. […]

- ➤ Minority Rights Group, Between the Millstones: The State of Iraq's Minorities Since the Fall of Mosul, February 2015
Key findings […]
The current situation for the millions of displaced persons in Iraq, many of whom belong to minority groups, is characterized by deteriorating humanitarian conditions in camps, abandoned buildings and informal settlements. The lack of an effective response from the government, combined with limited resources from international agencies, has left many without adequate food, water, health care, shelter and other necessities, with women and children especially vulnerable. […]
6 The current situation of internally displaced minorities […]
The humanitarian response
International standards, especially the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, note that 'national authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction', and overall responsibility for addressing their needs rests with the federal government and the KRG, with the assistance of international humanitarian organizations and other appropriate actors. However, due to the chaos inherent to conflict situations, disorganization within state structures and the failure to lay out an integrated national strategy, combined with a slow-starting relief effort, roles and responsibilities among domestic and international agencies have been confused, disjointed and less effective. With Resolution 328, the Iraqi government established the Supreme Committee for Displaced Persons in July 2014, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Saleh alMutlaq. The committee includes representatives from other Iraqi government ministries and was intended to provide assistance for the displaced as quickly as possible, overriding bureaucratic procedures. The committee established an executive committee with operations centres in the Iraqi Kurdish Region, Kirkuk, and other areas, as well as IQD 1 trillion (US$819 million) in promised funding. Nevertheless, assistance delivery has been undermined by insecurity and administrative hurdles, such as delays in NGOs obtaining clearances from Iraqi and Kurdish authorities to distribute humanitarian aid. […]
According to one senior government official interviewed in Baghdad, corruption remains an intrinsic feature of both the Iraqi and Kurdish political and military systems, and has contributed to undermining the international humanitarian response. Some accusations focus on the IQD 1 million (roughly US$850) cash grant available for each family displaced by the ISIS advance, with allegations of widespread fraud among staff. Several accounts confirmed that cash assistance has been diverted, with numerous families finding on arrival at distribution points that their money had already been collected. Some officials have requested bribes from IDPs to receive their grant, and many families have complied. Reportedly, a second round of cash grants is being considered. There are also reports of price gouging and businesses inflating prices on supplies provided by the government. Reportedly, Erbil and Dohuk governorate staff have skimmed billions of Iraqi dinars. […]
Yezidi people, in particular, have faced discrimination and distrust on the part of Kurdish and Iraqi authorities. A Sinjari Yezidi told researchers for this report that he had been asked by KRG officials to indicate on a form which group his family belonged in order to receive humanitarian aid. As the only available option was 'Kurd', he refused, insisting that he and his family were Yezidi: they were then expelled from their temporary shelter. Other sources confirm that there have been instances when the KRG has diverted aid from Yezidis simply on the basis of their identity. […]
Nevertheless, field visits by IILHR and UNPO in November 2014 to Erbil and Dohuk found that very little of the international efforts had translated into action on the ground. One problem is that, given the speed of ISIS's summer offensive, the Iraqi government has not yet been able to enact an integrated national plan that addresses the recent wave of internal displacement within the country. This is at least partly because sectarian and ethnic power struggles within the government have prevented the creation of effective provincial and urban governments. Without clarity of vision and clear bureaucratic structures, as well as an effective police force or legal system, it is increasingly difficult to implement state-wide policies, including the management of refugees and IDPs. While the involvement of many international organizations could

offer some help with the refugee and IDP problem, UNHCR – arguably the most significant international actor involved in the Iraqi crisis – has already stated that its activities will concentrate primarily on the situation of refugees, in line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which stipulate that IDPs are the responsibility of the state. It has also struggled to raise sufficient funds, having failed to secure over half of the total US$564.3 million funding that it deemed necessary to implement its full crisis response plan in Iraq. While UNHCR has declared that it will advocate for the GoI and KRG to fulfil their international legal obligations in protecting the IDP population, severe governance challenges and lack of collaboration between the GoI and KRG, inter alia, obstruct the practical implementation of any crisis response plan. This means that on the ground, displaced families find themselves caught between the competing claims of local officials and UNHCR representatives that primary responsibility for the management of IDP camps falls to the international community or national authorities, respectively. This situation is made worse by discrimination towards certain minority groups. For instance, interviews with local NGO staff, politicians and IDPs in camps in the Dohuk area of the Iraqi Kurdish Region, confirmed that humanitarian aid is inadequate. […]

Conditions of IDP camps and informal settlements

The condition of IDP camps, the well-being of displaced people and the humanitarian response varies considerably. While many Assyrian IDPs have found refuge with friends or family in the Iraqi Kurdish Region, Yezidis are mostly based in IDP camps in the Dohuk and Erbil governorates in deteriorating conditions. While in the summer many IDPs in Iraq were affected by dehydration, during the winter IDPs and refugees without appropriate shelter or winter supplies are at risk. Floods due to heavy rains in late October, for example, affected an estimated 100,000 IDPs living in camps in Dohuk, mostly Assyrians and Yezidis. Many of them were forced to abandon their shelters as a result. […]

Shelter and winterization assistance

The provision of adequate shelter became an urgent issue for tens of thousands of displaced minority members, particularly during winter. […]

Rents in the Iraqi Kurdish Region are reportedly very high and those who have been able to rent accommodation risk running out of savings. […]

Employment and education […]

Though children have the right to be educated in their mother tongue under the Iraqi Constitution of 2005, this has not been respected. In the Iraqi Kurdish Region, for example, minority groups are pressured to be educated in Kurdish and financial incentives are used to promote the language. Provision of education in the children's native tongue is also under-resourced in Iraq: many Turkmen communities, for example, have struggled to access education in their own language. In this context – with an estimated three quarters (472,000) of young IDPs in need of educational services – the risk of children from minority groups missing out on an education is especially acute. Despite efforts by local, regional and national governments in Iraq, as well as the UN and its partners, the response so far has been insufficient. […]

➢ UNHCR, UNHCR Position on Returns to Iraq, October 2014

[…] Humanitarian Situation […]

20. In areas hosting IDPs, the conflict has considerably delayed the start of the academic school year, especially in central Iraq and in Dahuk governorate. Prolonged delays potentially create resentment among the host communities towards the presence of IDPs. Overcrowding, language barriers and differences in curriculum (in the Kurdistan Region) as well as registration complexities further hamper displaced children's access to education. Another challenge affecting the education system is the fact that over half of Iraq's 95,000 teachers have reportedly been displaced. […]

22. Lacking an income and running out of savings, if any, IDPs are at risk of renewed displacement. Reports indicate that IDPs had to return to their governorate of origin or were secondarily displaced to other part of Iraq as they were unable to afford the high cost of living in the Kurdistan Region. IDPs face growing challenges to obtain or renew civil identification documentation such as passports, PDS ration cards and nationality certificates, as this would usually require them to return to their place of origin where the original records are maintained – a prospect that is not feasible for many at this current time. Special offices have been established in Baghdad and Najaf to provide document replacement services; however, IDPs in other parts of the country, especially the Kurdistan Region, face challenges to access these services, including high travel costs. IDPs without valid civil documentation may be unable to register with local authorities (in the Kurdistan Region) or the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM, in areas under control of the central government), thereby preventing them from regularizing their stay and thus limiting

access to assistance and public services. There are reports of IDP identity documents being confiscated by authorities in order to control their movement. […]

Conditions in displacement for women and children

➢ OCHA, Iraq Crisis Situation Report No. 42 (29 April – 5 May 2015), 5 May 2015
[…] Protection […]
Gaps and Constraints […]
Child protection actors' capacity to respond to the growing child protection needs in Baghdad, and in hard-to-reach areas remains limited. […]

➢ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding observations on the combined second to fourth periodic reports of Iraq, 3 March 2015
[…] F. Disability, basic health and welfare (arts. 6, 18, para. 3, 23, 24, 26, 27, paras. 1–3, and 33)
Health and health services
60. The Committee notes with appreciation that there has been a significant increase in immunization coverage and institutional delivery since 2006, but regrets the high rate of under-5 mortality, the high prevalence of chronic undernutrition and maternal mortality, especially concerning underage mothers, in rural areas and the central and southern regions. This includes the increased emergence of communicable and non-communicable diseases, including the high risk of a polio and measles outbreak, and a high rate of malnutrition among internally displaced children. The Committee is also concerned that, while the armed conflict is having a devastating impact on the availability and quality of health care, the State party devotes a low percentage of the federal budget to its health-care system. […]
G. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28-31)
Education, including vocational training and guidance
72. The Committee welcomes the National Education and Higher Education Strategy (2011–2020). It notes with concern, however, that only half of secondary school-age children are currently attending school, as a consequence of schools being attacked and schoolchildren kidnapped on their way to school, and that a very high number of internally displaced and refugee children have no access to school. The Committee is also concerned about:
(a) The state of disrepair of school buildings which have been bombed and destroyed or which have been occupied by displaced communities;
(b) Insufficient and inadequate education materials, as well as lack of access to clean drinking water and adequate sanitation in schools;
(c) The highly insecure situation of teachers, many of whom have been assassinated or kidnapped, have fled the country or have been obliged to work under threat for the so-called ISIL; […]
H. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37 (b)–(d) and 38–40)
Internally displaced and refugee children
74. The Committee is seriously concerned about the situation of insecurity and poor living conditions of refugee and internally displaced families and children, especially those who remain cut off from any humanitarian assistance and who suffer starvation in the mountains. The Committee is particularly concerned that children are recruited by non State armed groups and that internally displaced and refugee families live under constant threat in overcrowded settlements, often without access to safe drinking water and sanitation, sewage disposal, health services, heating systems, blankets or winter clothes.
The Committee is also concerned that:
(a) The provision of instalment grants to displaced families by the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, as well as the provision of treatment and preventative services, have only benefited a small number of internally displaced children and that access to food rations, education, government benefits and financial assistance is provided only after presentation of identification documents which most of them do not possess;
(b) Refugee and internally displaced girls are particularly exposed to domestic violence, forced, temporary (muta'a) and early marriages and "sexual exploitation";
(c) Most refugee and internally displaced children lack access to education while child labour is on the increase; and

(d) NGOs are not allowed to provide displaced persons with shelter […]

Children in street situations

82. The Committee is very concerned about the large number of children, including many internally displaced children, living and/or working in the streets, where they are exposed to various forms of crime, including sexual violence and abuse, to drugs and to being used by criminal gangs. […]

Sale, trafficking and abduction

84. The Committee is deeply concerned that internal displacement and sectarian violence have also led to a significant increase in trafficking, with many children being trafficked, in particular for sexual exploitation and domestic servitude, but also for forced labour or services, slavery or similar practices and servitude, both within the country and in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The Committee is also particularly concerned about reports of children being trafficked from orphanages by employees for the purpose of forced prostitution. […]

➢ [Minority Rights Group International/Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, No Place to Turn: Violence against women in the Iraq conflict, February 2015](#)

Introduction […]

The fighting in Iraq has generated mass population displacement and created tens of thousands of widows and female-headed households. Often driven to economic desperation due to the loss of male breadwinners, and cut off from community support structures, displaced women and their children are at high risk of sexual abuse and being trafficked into prostitution by criminal gangs. Women who fall prey to sexual exploitation can easily become trapped in cycles of abuse. Because of the stigma associated with kidnapping, sexual assault and involvement in prostitution (even if forced), many women do not have the choice of returning to their families. […]

Other conflict-related mortality factors […]

Women who have been displaced or who are living in conflict areas face particular vulnerabilities because of their gender. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), as many as 19,000 displaced women are currently pregnant and there are an estimated 300 childbirths every week among displaced women in the Dohuk governorate alone. Access to reproductive healthcare is a serious challenge for displaced women, as many camps are located far away from health centres, with health care being provided instead by mobile medical teams, which are staffed by volunteer doctors and are unable to reach all IDPs. One human rights organization reported that 133 women displaced since ISIS's takeover of Ninewa have given birth in the streets, camps, or school buildings because they were unable to go to medical centres. Another organization reported multiple cases of miscarriage, hemorrhaging, and other health complications among women living in IDP camps.

Access to women's healthcare is also a pressing concern for women on their way from conflict zones, or who are still living in areas affected by the conflict. On 1 July 2014, a woman gave birth at the Kelek checkpoint when the Peshmerga forces refused to allow her entry to Erbil to go to a hospital, resulting in the death of the baby. On 29 July, a woman who was six months pregnant suffered from a miscarriage at a checkpoint outside Erbil, and was made to wait twelve hours before being allowed entry.

According to an IOM survey, many women living in the central region indicated that while medical services were available, healthcare for women's issues was lacking. An assessment carried out in May 2014 found that 96 per cent of healthcare sites assessed in Anbar governorate lacked essential equipment and suitable healthcare for women. […]

IDP and refugee camps

Women who have managed to escape from ISIS captivity face a very difficult situation. After having been victims of forced marriage, rape, torture and other violations, most of the escapees have made their way to the Kurdish governorates, where, like other IDPs, they have found shelter in tents, unfinished building structures, and other temporary living arrangements. In addition to the trauma they have been through, these women and girls' psychological recovery is impeded by the fact that many of them have family members who have been killed or are still being held hostage by ISIS. Many of the returned women and girls are in desperate need of emergency medical treatment in addition to psychosocial support and counselling. However, indications show that very little is being done on the part of the authorities to provide them with these services. According to the Yezidi Fraternity and Solidarity League, none of the 175 female returnees from ISIS captivity they interviewed had been registered by any official agencies or offered any type of support services from the government. Instead, various humanitarian and non-governmental organizations, many staffed by volunteers, are attempting to tend to the needs of these

women. The incidence of depression and other mental illnesses is very high among women who have returned from captivity. In addition, there have been several confirmed suicides of women living in shelter arrangements in the KRG. In the words of one activist, It's two parts. Freeing the girls, and taking care of the ones who are here. But from what we see here, there is no real work done here for takingcare of the ones who returned. Sadly, women and girls who have sought refuge in camps for the displaced are not safe from further sexual violence. Sexual exploitation has long been a concern within the Syrian refugee camps in Kurdistan. In a study carried out by UN Women, 54 per cent of female Syrian refugees surveyed believed there was a very high risk of being sexually harassed in Kurdistan. Some women reported non-Syrian men entering their tents in hopes of catching them alone or undressed, while others recounted being pressured or offered money to engage in sexual relationships. In early 2014, a 16-year old Syrian Kurdish refugee girl was kidnapped and raped by six people in Erbil, leading more than 500 Syrian refugees to protest outside the Kurdish parliament for more protection for refugees from exploitation. Since the beginning of the latest crisis, there have been anecdotal reports of women in the camps being harassed, sexually exploited, or blackmailed for sex. According to UN Women, unsegregated living arrangements and inadequate security within the shelter arrangements are opening women and girls to the risk of gender-based violence. Moreover, men have been returning to their towns and villages to check on the situation, leaving their female family members vulnerable. […]

5 Trafficking in women and girls

Vulnerability factors

Displaced women, especially widows and female-headed households, are particularly vulnerable to trafficking. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, there are currently at least 3,067,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq. This figure includes the 1.967 million displaced between December 2013 and November 2014 alone, added to the 1.1 million still displaced from the sectarian fighting of 2006-2007. An unknown number of people are likely still displaced from the 2003 invasion and its aftermath. In addition, there are currently 228,484 registered Syrian refugees living in Iraq, mostly in Erbil and Dohuk.

There were approximately 1,600,000 widows in Iraq at the beginning of 2014 and even more female-headed households. During the height of the sectarian violence, an estimated 90-100 women became widows every day. Approximately 33 per cent of displaced widows had not received any humanitarian assistance and 76 per cent do not receive a pension. These figures are likely much higher now given the latest wave of displacement. The dire economic situation of widows means that many are pushed to engage in temporary marriages to sustain themselves or fall prey to sexual exploitation […]

- [Minority Rights Group, Between the Millstones: The State of Iraq's Minorities Since the Fall of Mosul, February 2015](#)

[…] 6 The current situation of internally displaced minorities […]

The situation of women and children

Women and children have been disproportionately affected by conditions in IDP camps and informal settlements, and are vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence within the camps. While the UN has established a Gender Based Violence Subworking Group, with the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) leading efforts to provide psychosocial assistance to women and girls, there remains a lack of tailored care for Yezidi and Christian women who have been resettled into camps after being kidnapped or sexually assaulted by ISIS militants, particularly given the social stigma frequently attached to victims of sexual violence. Appropriate sanitation facilities and services remain a matter of urgency, as this has an impact on rates of sexual violence and harassment of displaced women. In Khanke camp in Dohuk governorate, during field research undertaken for this report in November 2014, the few latrines set up at the site were made of basic fabric attached to wooden poles. Most women would wait until nightfall to clean themselves out on the open field surrounding the camp. But while awareness and sensitization are essential to the proper management of gender issues in the camps, women are often marginalized and disempowered in this context. Children, particularly those from persecuted minority groups such as Yezidis, have suffered human rights abuses, including forced recruitment, kidnapping and trafficking at the hands of ISIS, and remain vulnerable to further abuse in IDP camps. Between 10 June and 3 November 2014, there were 415 confirmed violations against children, with a further 200 cases waiting verification. These numbers do not reflect the true extent of human rights violations against children as there is inadequate reporting and monitoring of such abuses in the camps. Efforts to increase monitoring in camps to prevent these crimes are ongoing, including training of social workers and other experts to care for

these children. While specialized protection services are so far unavailable, some children are reported to have access to psychosocial support services and psychological care. The trauma experienced by many displaced members of minority groups, and the absence of appropriate services for them, was evident in a number of recent interviews with IDPs. […]

➢ UNHCR, UNHCR Position on Returns to Iraq, October 2014

[…] Humanitarian Situation […]

19. In areas of displacement, local authorities and communities are overstretched and unable to provide all IDPs with basic services and public infrastructure, many of whom arrived with little more than the clothes on their backs and with limited financial resources to support themselves. Adequate shelter is a key concern. The primary shelter arrangement for displaced populations is to stay with host communities. However, as the availability of housing to host displaced populations has become drastically limited due to the massive displacement crisis, and the cost of accommodation has significantly increased, many newly displaced populations had to occupy unfinished or abandoned buildings, schools, mosques and churches. Others are living in the open in substandard living conditions, exposing them to significant health risks during the forthcoming winter season. Inadequate housing has reportedly resulted in secondary displacement. There are concerns that IDPs in Kerbala and Najef, who are currently sheltering in mosques and pilgrim guesthouses, may be at risk of eviction ahead of forthcoming religious festivals. Living in extremely overcrowded conditions and with limited or no privacy gives rise to protection concerns, including harassment and all forms of exploitation, especially for women and children. […]

20. In areas hosting IDPs, the conflict has considerably delayed the start of the academic school year, especially in central Iraq and in Dahuk governorate. Prolonged delays potentially create resentment among the host communities towards the presence of IDPs. Overcrowding, language barriers and differences in curriculum (in the Kurdistan Region) as well as registration complexities further hamper displaced children's access to education. Another challenge affecting the education system is the fact that over half of Iraq's 95,000 teachers have reportedly been displaced. […]

Restrictions on entry

➢ UNHCR, UNHCR IDP Operational Update 1-15 April 2015, 12 May 2015

[…] Operational Context […]

UNHCR is concerned about the processing arrangements and restrictions on access to safety in Baghdad, including a sponsorship requirement imposed by State security actors. Access limitations were also in evidence in other governorates. People waiting at various checkpoint found themselves without shelter and facing worsening conditions, exhausted and anxious to move on to more secure locations. Some people had walked for miles without food and water and were in urgent need of assistance. In the Kirkuk Governorate, IDPs travelling through the Hawija and Daquq sub-districts were prevented from accessing safety in Kirkuk city and remained blocked at checkpoints […]

➢ OCHA, Iraq Crisis Situation Report No. 42 (29 April – 5 May 2015), 5 May 2015

[…] Protection […]

Needs:

⬜ Restrictions on access to safety and on IDP registration continue in Sulaymaniyah, Babylon, Kerbala, Najaf, and Baghdad governorates. […]

➢ IRIN, Displaced Iraqis blocked from Baghdad, 20 April 2015

Thousands of Iraqis fleeing the so-called Islamic State are being prevented from entering the capital Baghdad and other cities because local officials fear IS sleeper cells could be among them. IS militants have overtaken parts of the city of Ramadi, causing more than 4,000 families to flee the area in recent days. At Bzebez bridge, which links Anbar and Baghdad provinces some 30 kilometres southwest of Baghdad, thousands wait at checkpoints while officials demand residents in the capital vouch for them before they enter. […]

Many internally displaced people know no one in the city and have therefore been stranded at the checkpoint for several days, sleeping rough with little clean water. […]

Interior ministry spokesman General Saad Maan defended the move to require Baghdad residents to vouch for the displaced, a policy which was allegedly partially lifted on Sunday - though thousands are still waiting. […]

An alternative route for those displaced by the fighting, encouraging them to go to through neighbouring Babil governorate, has also been partially blocked.

"The province has decided to prevent people between the ages of 18 and 50 from entering the city for security reasons," said Sadiq Madlool, governor of Babil. "We ordered our security checkpoints to prevent young men from entering." […]

➢ Human Rights Watch, Arabs Displaced, Cordoned Off, Detained: Harsh Restrictions in Northern Iraq While Kurds Move Freely, 26 February 2015

Iraqi Kurdish forces have confined thousands of Arabs in "security zones" in areas of northern Iraq that they have captured since August 2014 from the extremist group Islamic State, also known as ISIS. Kurdish forces for months barred Arabs displaced by fighting from returning to their homes in portions of Ninewa and Erbil provinces, while permitting Kurds to return to those areas and even to move into homes of Arabs who fled. Some restrictions were eased in January 2015, after Human Rights Watch communicated with the Kurdish regional government about the issue, but others remain.

Local Kurds told Human Rights Watch that Iraqi Kurdish citizens or forces of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) have destroyed dozens of Arab homes in the areas, which the KRG appears to be seeking to incorporate into Kurdish autonomous territory. Arab residents in one cordoned-off zone said that KRG forces detained 70 local Arab men for long periods without charge. […]

Human Rights Watch found no evidence of Kurdish forces imposing similar restrictions on movements of Kurds. […]

➢ IRIN, No-man's land: the Iraqis trapped between IS and the Kurds, 12 February 2015

Yahyawah is a muddy, tented settlement to the southeast of the Iraqi city of Kirkuk. Wedged between the borders of semi-autonomous Kurdistan and the front line of the so-called Islamic state (IS), it is in a geopolitical no-man's land.

Its current residents - members of the large Turkomen minority who fled the Tal Afar area, west of Mosul, when IS attacked it in June last year – say they feel stranded. They cannot return to their villages as they have been overrun by IS militants, nor are they being allowed into Kurdistan, and the proximity of IS means most of the rest of Iraq is also out of reach.

They are among a growing number of displaced Iraqis who accuse the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) of refusing them sanctuary in the relative safety of Kurdistan. […]

The Turkomen are not the only group of internally displaced persons (IDPs) struggling to get into Kurdistan to seek refuge there.

According to reports from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Sunni Arab IDPs have also been blocked from passing through various Kurdish checkpoints and some evicted from Kurdish residential areas.

"Over 20 IDP families in Kirkuk from Diyala Governorate were evicted from their houses and escorted to the Kirkuk border in early January," noted a report published on 30 January, adding the families had been living in Kirkuk since 2006, and that earlier that month another 170 families were threatened with eviction." […]

➢ Minority Rights Group, Between the Millstones: The State of Iraq's Minorities Since the Fall of Mosul, February 2015

[…] 6 The current situation of internally displaced minorities […]

Denial of entry

Another issue that minority communities have experienced is denial of entry from certain areas of Iraq, particularly by Kurdish forces. The KRG has been criticized by numerous human rights activists for applying discriminatory rules based on ethnicity and religion, with Assyrians, Kurds and Yezidis typically being permitted to enter the Iraqi Kurdish Region, while Iraqi Turkmen and Shi'a and Sunni Arabs have been denied access. OCHA has noted that the criteria for entering the territory of the Iraqi Kurdish Region are unclear and has verified reports that some displaced families have been denied entry to the Erbil governorate. There are also numerous reports of Arab IDPs being prevented from crossing internal boundaries and subjected to other forms of ill-treatment: this has been attributed to excessive caution on

security issues. Nevertheless, it should be recognized that the waves of displacement during ISIS's offensive not only galvanized the international humanitarian response but also brought a serious reassessment of Iraqi government policies. By September, in response to the seriousness of the situation, the governorates of Najaf and Kerbala were willingly hosting Yezidi IDPs – an important act of solidarity, given the discrimination historically experienced by this group. […]

Appendix

Useful sources to consult on the security situation in Iraq

Source	Type of source (information taken directly from website)	Website's search function
Centre for Strategic and International Studies – Iraq country page	The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) is a bipartisan, nonprofit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., USA. The CSIS conducts research and analysis and develops policy initiatives that look to the future and anticipate change.	• Simple search function which allows for keyword searches
Council on Foreign Relations – Global Conflict Tracker	The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) is an independent, nonpartisan membership organization, think tank, and publisher. The Global Conflict Tracker is an interactive guide to U.S. Conflict Prevention Priorities in 2014	• Simple search function by country
International Crisis Group – Iraq country page	The International Crisis Group is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation committed to preventing and resolving deadly conflict. The Iraq country page links to recent publications and Crisis Watch: *CrisisWatch* is a monthly bulletin designed to provide readers in the policy community, media, business and interested general public with a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.	• Simple search function which allows for keyword searches
International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) – Iraq country page	The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) is a world-leading authority on global security, political risk and military conflict. The Iraq country page contains commentaries, analysis and reports on the situation in Iraq.	• Simple and advanced search function by keyword, country, content type, date, related topics, and experts
Institute for the Study of War – Iraq country page	The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) is a non-partisan, non-profit, public policy research organization. The Iraq Project at the ISW produces detailed publications that monitor and analyze the changing security and political dynamics within Iraq. The Iraq country page contains links to useful sources such as: o Weekly 'Iraq Situation Report' o Maps o News and analysis reports	• Simple search function which allows for keyword searches
Institute for War and Peace Reporting – Iraq country page	The Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) is a registered charity and supports local reporters, citizen journalists and civil society activists in three dozen countries in conflict, crisis and transition around the world. The Iraq country page provides recent news.	• Simple search function which allows for keyword searches • Filters searches by year
Jamestown Foundation – Iraq country page	The Jamestown Foundation's mission is to inform and educate policy makers and the broader community about events and trends in those societies which are strategically or tactically important to the United States and which frequently restrict access to such information. Utilizing indigenous and primary sources, Jamestown's material is delivered without political bias, filter or agenda. It is often the only source of	• Simple and advanced search functions by keyword and phrases; organization;

	information which should be, but is not always, available through official or intelligence channels, especially in regard to Eurasia and terrorism.	publications; regions; and subject
The Long War Journal – Iraq country page	*The Long War Journal* is dedicated to providing original and accurate reporting and analysis of the Long War (also known as the Global War on Terror). This is accomplished through its programs of embedded reporters, news and news aggregation, maps, podcasts, and other multimedia formats. It is a project of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. The Iraq country page contains commentaries, analysis and reports on the situation in Iraq.	• Simple search function which allows for keyword searches
National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) – Global Terrorism Database (GTD)	The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism—better known as START—is a University of Maryland-based research and education center comprised of an international network of scholars committed to the scientific study of the causes and human consequences of terrorism in the United States and around the world. The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) is an open-source database including information on terrorist events around the world from 1970 through 2013 (with annual updates planned for the future).	• Simple and advanced search functions by date, region, country, perpetrator, weapon type, attack type, target type, terrorism criteria and casualties

NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq	The NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq, or NCCI, is an independent initiative that was launched by a group of NGOs present in Baghdad in April 2003. NCCI is a member-led organisation that coordinates principled, collective NGO action in order to foster development, address humanitarian needs, and promote respect for rights in Iraq.
	Its home page features links to:
	  o Latest publications
	  o Humanitarian Space
	  o Breaking News
		• Simple search function which allows for keyword searches

The New York Times – A visual guide to the crisis in Iraq and Syria	Visual analysis including graphs and maps describing the current security situation in Iraq. Latest titles include:
	  o Despite Tikrit Loss, ISIS Still Holds Large Swaths of Iraq, 07/04/2015
	  o ISIS Territory Remains Larger Than Many Countries, 06/04/2015
	  o ISIS Attacks Against Assyrian Christians, 26/02/2015
		• N.A.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty – Iraq country page	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reports the news in 21 countries where a free press is banned by the government or not fully established. The Iraq country pages provides information in chronological order on:
	  o Latest news
	  o Features & Commentary
		• Simple search function which allows for keyword searches and searches by phrases ("...") only
		• Allows searches within time frames and limits searches by section

Relief Web - Iraq country page	Relief Web is a database of reports from international and non-governmental organizations, governments, research institutions and the media for news, reports, press releases, appeals, policy documents, analysis and maps related to humanitarian emergencies worldwide. Provides:	• Country and thematic pages • Advanced search function which allows for:

	o In-depth profiles, updates and reports on countries and disasters o Maps o Database of who's reporting	o BOOLAN searches (AND, OR, NOT) o Searches for phrases ("....") ¬ o Limits searches by: Country; source; theme; content format; feature; disaster type; vulnerable groups; published date (by month); language
Thomson Reuters Foundation – Iraq country page	The Thomson Reuters Foundation stands for free, independent journalism, human rights, women's empowerment, and the rule of law. The Iraq country page provides recent news.	• General search page that allows to limit searches by: Keyword; date; type; theme; author; source, region; country; and topic
UN News Centre 'Advanced Search'	Provides news and key UN resources: o Latest developments o Maps of the region o Statement from the UN Secretary General; Security Council; General Assembly o Aid/development: UN Agencies & Programmes	• The advanced search function allows for: • 3 distinct key word/set phrases • Searches within time frames Searches limited by subject
UN Iraq – UN Agencies in Iraq	The United Nations Iraq (UN Iraq) works at the request of the government of Iraq to support national development efforts on political, electoral, and humanitarian levels. The UN advises and supports the government of Iraq and its people and works on capacity building to strengthen people and institutions during the democratic transition. The website provides links to: o Latest news and publications o Links to UN agencies operating in Iraq, including UNAMI	• Simple search function which allows for keyword searches
Uppsala Universitet – UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia – Iraq country page	The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) collects information on a large number of aspects of armed violence since 1946. Since 2004, the UCDP also operates and continuously updates its online database (UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia) on armed conflicts and organised violence, in which several aspects of armed conflict such as conflict dynamics and conflict resolution are available Further information available by clicking on the following list of options on the Iraq country page: o War & minor conflict o Non-state conflict o One-sided violence o Peace agreement	• N.A.
United States Institute of Peace – Iraq	The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) was created in 1984 as an independent, nonpartisan, federally funded organization. USIP works to	• Simple search function which

country page	prevent, mitigate, and resolve violent conflict around the world. The Iraq country page provides analysis and reports on recent developments.	allows for keyword searches
The Washington Institute – Iraq country page	The Washington Institute seeks to advance a balanced and realistic understanding of American interests in the Middle East and to promote the policies that secure them. The Iraq country page provides analysis and reports on recent developments.	• Simple search function which allows for keyword searches

Media sources below are useful for latest news on security and violent incidents in specific regions/cities/towns
Al Arabyia news
Al Jazeera
Al Monitor
Iraqi News
National Iraqi News Agency
Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty – Iraq country page
Rudaw
Thomson Reuters Foundation – Iraq country page

By using their 'search' function, the sources below provide further information on specific non-state armed groups	
Australian, UK and US lists of proscribed terrorist organizations	• Australian Government, *Australian National Security: Listed terrorist organisations*, Undated • UK Home Office, *Proscribed terror groups or organisations*, Last updated 27 March 2015 • U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Terrorist Organizations*, Undated
GlobalSecurity.org	GlobalSecurity.org is the leading source of background information and developing news stories in the fields of defense, space, intelligence, WMD, and homeland security. Launched in 2000, GlobalSecurity.org is the most comprehensive and authoritative online destination for those in need of both reliable background information and breaking news.
The Jamestown Foundation	The Jamestown Foundation's mission is to inform and educate policy makers and the broader community about events and trends in those societies which are strategically or tactically important to the United States and which frequently restrict access to such information.
National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) – Global Terrorism Database (GTD)	The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism—better known as START—is a University of Maryland-based research and education center comprised of an international network of scholars committed to the scientific study of the causes and human consequences of terrorism in the United States and around the world. The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) is an open-source database including information on terrorist events around the world from 1970 through 2013 (with annual updates planned for the future).
Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium (TRAC) [Advanced information only available via subscription]	Created by The Beacham Group, LLC, Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium (TRAC) is a uniquely comprehensive resource for the study of political violence of all kinds. In cooperation with a team of 2800 experts, TRAC gathers the best information for exploration of this topic by faculty, scholars, students, government and defense professionals, as well as the general public.
U.S. Department of State's 'Country Reports on Terrorism'	U.S. law requires the Secretary of State to provide Congress, by April 30 of each year, a full and complete report on terrorism with regard to those countries and groups meeting criteria set forth in the legislation

Useful sources to consult on the humanitarian situation in Iraq

Source	Type of source (information taken directly from website)	Website's search function
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Iraq country page	The IDMC is part of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), an independent, non-governmental humanitarian organisation. It provides: o Iraq figures analysis o Iraq Internal displacement in brief o Publications, maps, news and blog posts	• Advanced search function which allows for: • BOOLAN searches (AND, OR, NOT) and searches for phrases ("....") • It is not possible to search within particular time frames but searches can be organised by date and limited by theme
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Iraq country page	In Iraq, the ICRC visits detainees and enables them to maintain contact with their families, helps vulnerable groups, improves access to water and health care and supports the authorities' efforts to clarify the fate of people missing from earlier conflicts: o Latest News, fact and figures	• Country pages • Simple search function which allows for: keyword searches, phrases, organises search results by relevance and date and limited by theme
Internal Organization for Migration (IOM) Iraq Mission – Displacement Tracking Matrix	Relying on information from local authorities and field staff, the IOM Iraq Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) identifies the location of displaced populations, and IOM Rapid Assessment and Response Teams evaluate their needs. The main webpage provides links to: o Maps (e.g. displacement trends on a monthly basis from Governorates, Districts to location levels) o Reports (monthly)	• Simple search function which allows for keyword searches
IRIN news, Iraq country page	IRIN is a service of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. It provides: o Humanitarian news and analysis by country and theme.	• Country and thematic pages • Advanced search function which allows for o Keyword searches (Exact Wording; All the Words; Any Words) o Limits searches by Services; Country; Theme; Report Type o Searches within time frames (From: To)
NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq	The NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq, or NCCI, is an independent initiative that was launched by a group of NGOs present in Baghdad in April 2003. NCCI is a member-led organisation that coordinates principled, collective NGO action in order to foster development, address humanitarian needs, and promote respect for rights in Iraq. Its home page features links to: o Latest publications o Humanitarian Space o Breaking News	• Simple search function which allows for keyword searches
Relief Web, Iraq country page	Relief Web is a specialised service of UNOCHA (see below), which provides reliable disaster and crisis updates and analysis to humanitarians. It provides:	• Country and thematic pages • Advanced search function which allows for BOOLAN

	o Updates and analysis from more than 4,000 global information sources o Maps and info-graphics on crises and natural disasters	searches (AND, OR, NOT) and searches for phrases ("....") • Limits searches by: Country; organisation; theme; content format; feature; disaster type; vulnerable groups; publication date (by month); language
Thomson Reuters Foundation – Iraq country page	The Thomson Reuters Foundation stands for free, independent journalism, human rights, women's empowerment, and the rule of law. The Iraq country page provides recent news.	• General search page that allows to limit searches by: Keyword; date; type; theme; author; source, region; country; and topic
UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Iraq country page	Key documents Include: o Most recent concluding observations o Country visits by Special Procedures o Universal periodic review o News archives	• Advanced search function which allows for searches by: • Phrase; ALL words; ANY words • Orders search by relevance or date
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), Iraq country page	UNOCHA reports published: o Key figures o Maps Crisis Situation Reports (weekly)	• Simple search function which allows for keyword and BOOLEAN searches (AND, OR, NOT) and searches for phrases ("...") only (cannot order search results by date)
UNHCR, Iraq country page	UNHCR is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. UNHCR country pages provide: o Statistical snapshot o Latest news o UNHCR fundraising reports o Background, analysis and policy o Statistics o Maps o Iraq Fact Sheet	• Country page does not have a search function • UNHCR home page has an advanced search function which allows for BOOLAN searches (AND, OR, NOT, ALL) and keyword by title • Limits searches by category, country of origin, country of asylum • Searches within time frames
UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons	Its main page provides links to: o Latest news and statements o Latest developments o Country visits and annual reports	• Does not seem to have a specific search function
UN News Centre 'Advanced Search'	Provides news and key UN resources: o Latest developments o Maps of the region o Statement from the UN Secretary General; Security Council; General Assembly o Aid/development: UN Agencies & Programmes	• The advanced search function allows for: • 3 distinct key word/set phrases • Searches within time frames • Searches limited by subject
UN Iraq – UN Agencies in Iraq	The United Nations Iraq (UN Iraq) works at the request of the government of Iraq to support national development efforts on political, electoral, and humanitarian levels. The UN advises and supports the government of Iraq and its people and works on capacity building to strengthen people and institutions	• Simple search function which allows for keyword searches

	during the democratic transition. The website provides links to: o Latest news and publications o Links to UN agencies operating in Iraq, including UNAMI	

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