

IRAQ CIVILIANS UNDER FIRE

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CONTENTS

1/INTRODUCTION	5
2/TARGETED FOR SPEAKING OUT	7
HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS	7
WOMEN'S RIGHTS CAMPAIGNERS	7
MEDIA WORKERS	9
POLITICAL ACTIVISTS	11
3/VIOLENCE AGAINST RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES	13
FLIGHT AND DISPLACEMENT	14
TERRITORIAL DISPUTES	16
4/VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS	19
LICENSED TO KILL WOMEN	20
INSUFFICIENT PROTECTION	20
5/ATTACKS ON GAY MEN	21
LICENSED TO KILL GAY MEN	21
NO PROTECTION	22
6/DISPLACED PEOPLE	23
RETURNING DESPITE THE DANGER	23
VIOLENCE AGAINST REFUGEES	25
RECOMMENDATIONS	26
ENDNOTES	27



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Painting by Iraqi artist and human rights defender Hussein al-Ibrahemi, portraying his experiences as a refugee in Syria.

1/INTRODUCTION

Hundreds of civilians are still being killed or maimed every month in Iraq, even if the past two years have seen an overall reduction in the number of civilian deaths. As a result, safety and security remain key concerns for Iraqis – especially for those who, because of their religious, ethnic or other identity or because of their profession or work, are particularly vulnerable to be targeted for violent attack.

Although civilians have been killed, injured or otherwise abused by Iraqi security forces and foreign troops based in Iraq, and by members of private military and security companies, most killings of civilians are being carried out by armed groups.

On 25 January 2010, for example, three co-ordinated bomb attacks on hotels in Baghdad killed 36 people and left more than 70 injured, many of them civilians. The Islamic State of Iraq, an umbrella organization of armed groups linked to “al-Qa’ida in Iraq”, was reported to have claimed responsibility for this and other attacks, including bombings that killed about 400 people and injured more than 1,600 – the overwhelming majority of them civilians – in central Baghdad in August, October and December 2009.

The Islamic State of Iraq and other armed groups, most of them Sunni Iraqi and not necessarily linked to al-Qa’ida, have claimed responsibility for many violent attacks on civilians. However, in many other incidents no one has claimed responsibility and it is often impossible to determine precisely who was responsible. Often, attacks are attributed to particular armed groups without clear evidence but on the basis that they resemble their pattern of behaviour. Generally, the most devastating attacks involve suicide bombers and often appear intended to cause large numbers of civilian casualties. These are believed to be the work

of armed groups opposed to the Iraqi government and the presence of US troops, and whose aims include undermining public confidence in the government and its security forces by making Iraq appear ungovernable.

Civilians in Iraq are also being targeted by political militias, most of them linked to Shi’a political parties represented in the Iraqi parliament. Armed groups and militias with an extremist Islamist agenda – including al-Qa’ida and affiliated Sunni Islamist groups as well as the Mahdi Army, a Shi’a militia – have killed women and men because of their political views, their religious or other identity, and their perceived or alleged transgression of traditional gender roles or moral codes.

In this climate of fear many Iraqis adapt their lives in the hope of avoiding attack. Some try to disguise aspects of their identity, including some who seek to conceal their religious affiliation for fear that they will be targeted for sectarian reasons. Others adhere to strict moral codes against their free will, including women and girls who feel obliged to wear the hijab (Islamic headscarf) in order to avoid attack by religious militants. Some – perhaps many – simply feel it safer to keep silent about their views.

This report focuses on civilians who are particularly at risk of attack because of their human rights or professional work; their political activities; their identity, gender or sexual orientation; or their plight as displaced people.¹

Not all are targeted by armed groups, militias or security forces; people challenging traditional gender roles or moral codes are also at risk of attack by relatives, including some who consider that they are defending family “honour”. For example, at least 25 men were murdered in Baghdad in the first quarter of 2009 because of their perceived sexual orientation; some were tortured before being killed and their bodies were mutilated. In Basra, dozens of women have been killed in recent years; sometimes, their killers left notes by their bodies indicating that they had been killed for their allegedly “un-Islamic” behaviour. In both cases, those who committed the killings included relatives of the victims as well as members of Islamist armed groups or militias.

In general, community, political and religious leaders have failed to take effective steps to stop and prevent attacks on vulnerable groups, and to bring those

responsible to justice. Indeed, some have expressed views apparently intended to incite violence against fellow Iraqis because of their identity.

In the northerly, semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region, comprising Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaimaniya governorates, which has been much less affected by the violence prevailing in the rest of Iraq, the authorities have taken some positive steps to combat violence against women, although these still need to be further developed and consolidated. Overall, however, the Iraqi authorities have failed to take effective action to protect individuals and groups at risk.

In particular, the authorities have failed to conduct thorough and impartial investigations into many attacks on and other violent crimes against civilians, and a climate of impunity continues to prevail. In the case of violence against women and girls, and attacks on men perceived to be gay, the climate of impunity is underpinned by Iraqi legislation and jurisprudence, which provides for lenient punishment for attackers who are deemed to have acted in defence of "honour".

Impunity is further entrenched by the involvement of the authorities themselves in numerous incidents of intimidation of and attacks against critics, including journalists reporting on alleged corruption and misconduct by officials. In the Kurdistan Region, the two ruling parties are believed to be responsible for a pattern of targeted violent attacks against journalists and opposition political activists.

This report is largely based on interviews and other research carried out by Amnesty International in northern Iraq in April and December 2009. Those who provided information to Amnesty International came from many different parts of the country and included human rights defenders, women's rights activists, journalists, members of religious and ethnic minorities and members of Iraq's gay community. Other information was provided by Iraqi refugees in countries such as Syria and Jordan, both of which host large numbers of refugees from Iraq. Amnesty International has previously raised the concerns and many of the cases highlighted in this report in its numerous communications to the Iraqi authorities.

Amnesty International is urging armed groups and militias in Iraq to immediately cease all human rights abuses including attacks against civilians, abductions,

hostage-taking and the killing, torture and other ill-treatment of captives. Leaders of armed groups and militias must issue clear orders that fighters refrain from such unlawful attacks. Many attacks carried out by them constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity, and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

Amnesty International is also urging the Iraqi security forces and the United States Forces-Iraq (USF-I), as well as private security companies assisting them, to respect the human rights of civilians at all times, and is calling on the Iraqi authorities to improve protection of groups that are particularly at risk of attack. Timely, impartial and thorough investigations must be held into all attacks against civilians and alleged human rights violations, and the perpetrators of such attacks and violations must be held to account in conformity with Iraq's obligations under international law. Without determined action to end the climate of impunity, the killing, maiming and persecution of various groups of civilians in Iraq will continue.

INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Under international humanitarian law, parties to an armed conflict must at all times distinguish between non-combatants (including civilians, prisoners of war, the wounded and sick and others) and combatants, and between civilian objects and military objects. The principle of distinction, codified in the four Geneva Convention and its two Additional Protocols, is also a rule of customary international humanitarian law, binding all parties to a conflict, whether international or non-international.

Under customary international humanitarian law, responsibility for war crimes may arise for conduct engaged in during international and non-international armed conflicts. Conduct amounting to war crimes includes, but is not limited to, acts such as wilful killing; torture or inhuman treatment; taking hostages; intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population; intentionally directing attacks against people involved in humanitarian assistance or peace keeping; and indiscriminate attacks, which violate fundamental principles of international humanitarian law, including the principle of distinction between civilians and civilian objects on the one hand, and members of armed forces and military objects on the other.

2/TARGETED FOR SPEAKING OUT

People who have expressed particular views or stood up for human rights have been threatened, attacked, abducted and killed, and continue to be at grave risk. Among them are activists and journalists who report on abuses by armed groups or militias or alleged corruption by officials, lawyers representing victims of torture, activists campaigning for minority rights, and women campaigning for women's rights, legal reforms or shelters for abused women and girls. Many human rights defenders and activists have described to Amnesty International the attacks, threats and harassment that they have faced.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In the wake of the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, hundreds of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) emerged and thousands of people were able openly to become involved in human rights-related activities. This initial enthusiasm for a new-found freedom of expression, association and assembly was gradually replaced, however, by deepening fear and trepidation amid the widespread lawlessness and violence that subsequently engulfed much of Iraq. Threats and attacks have forced many human rights defenders to scale down or stop their activities or flee the country.

Adib Ibrahim al-Jalabi, a medical doctor and leading figure in the Islamic Organization for Human Rights (IOHR), was murdered on 12 May 2007 by unidentified armed men, believed to be connected to al-Qa'ida, shortly after he left his clinic in Mosul. Other IOHR members received death threats by armed groups, including **Hareth Adeeb Ibrahim**, head of the IOHR, who believes that he and other human rights



Sahar Hussain al-Haideri, journalist and human rights defender, shot dead on 7 June 2007 in Mosul (see page 8). No one has been brought to justice for her murder.

defenders have been targeted because of their reporting of abuses by armed groups or militias:

*"These groups and gangs have imposed a reign of terror on human rights campaigners. [Their] threats included warnings against the publication of any information we had gathered about their activities and consider to be gross human rights abuses, such as targeting of civilians, abductions and bombings."*²

A human rights defender from southern Iraq, who fled the country in 2006 after surviving an attack on his life but then returned to Iraq in 2007, told Amnesty International in April 2009 that the human rights organization in which he is involved has been forced to cut back its activities for security reasons and to cease actively monitoring and documenting abuses for fear of reprisals. In his assessment, victims of human rights abuses and their relatives have also become increasingly reluctant to provide information about the abuses they have suffered out of fear for their own and their families' future safety.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS CAMPAIGNERS

Women who have taken the lead in confronting violence against women and promoting women's rights have been directly targeted because of their activities,



Demonstrators in Baghdad demanding freedom of the press, August 2009.

notably by members of Islamist armed groups and militias. Some have been attacked and killed because of their efforts to promote gender equality.

Sahar Hussain al-Haideri, a 44-year-old journalist and woman human rights defender, was shot dead on 7 June 2007 in Mosul. She had frequently reported on discrimination against women and criticized Islamist armed groups for abusing women's rights. She had survived an earlier abduction attempt and had received death threats. Ansar al-Islam, an Islamist armed group, was reported to have claimed responsibility for her murder.

Male relatives of women victims of violence frequently threaten or attack women activists. A woman lawyer in the Kurdistan Region told Amnesty International that she had received death threats on her mobile phone from relatives of a woman who had been abused by her husband and for whom she had filed divorce papers. One message she received in 2008 read: "Where do you want to hide? If she gets a divorce we will take our right. We know that you are her lawyer. We are able to get hold of you and kill you."

In Sulaimaniya, a shelter run by ASUDA, an NGO helping women at risk of violence, was attacked on 11 May 2008. Gunmen, believed to be relatives of a woman who was being given refuge at the shelter, fired several shots into it from a neighbouring building, seriously wounding the woman. The Kurdish authorities subsequently arrested several male relatives of the woman who had been shot, but released them for lack of evidence. To date, no one has been charged or tried for the attack.

Because many women human rights defenders campaign for gender equality, they are often viewed as defying social norms, structures and practices. By challenging the traditional role of women they run the risk of being socially ostracized, as well as attacked. At a meeting in April 2009 in northern Iraq, Iraqi women human rights defenders told Amnesty International that they had been accused of being "unbelievers" and threatened for demanding that women be given equality under the law, including the Personal Status Law that governs matters relating to marriage, divorce and inheritance. One woman observed:

“It is a challenge to work on gender issues and on violence against women. We are frequently accused of portraying a bad image of our society, but we have to expose the reality.”

Despite the risks and challenges they continue to face, women’s rights activists have achieved some progress. For example, a quarter of seats of the Iraqi parliament are now reserved for women and, in the Kurdistan Region, changes to the Penal Code and Personal Status Law have enhanced women’s rights.

MEDIA WORKERS

Media professionals in Iraq continue to be at high risk of attack or injury because of their work. The Committee to Protect Journalists documented the cases of 89 journalists and 44 media support workers, most of them Iraqis, who were killed in targeted attacks between March 2003 and October 2009.³ Scores of other journalists have been killed in crossfire and other violent incidents. Outspoken journalists have been threatened and attacked for their reporting on official corruption and violent crimes committed by armed groups and militias.

Sarwa Abdel Wahab, a 36-year-old journalist, was pulled out of her car on 4 May 2008 and shot dead by unidentified gunmen in the al-Bakr district of Mosul. In the weeks before her killing she had published articles critical of Islamist armed groups on the Muraslon news site and received at least one threatening phone call from a person reportedly linked to the Islamic State of Iraq armed group.

Ahmed 'Abd al-Hussein, a journalist with *al-Sabah* newspaper, received death threats in August 2009 because of an article in which he blamed the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), a Shi'a political party, of involvement in a bank robbery which resulted in deaths. Those charged in connection with the robbery included at least one security guard of 'Adel 'Abdul Mahdi, one of Iraq’s Vice-Presidents and a senior member of the ISCI, who denied any involvement of his party in the incident.

'Emad 'Abadi, a 36-year-old journalist with Al Diyar TV station, was attacked by unidentified gunmen in central



'Emad 'Abadi during a TV discussion the day before he was shot and wounded by unidentified gunmen in November 2009 in Baghdad.



Nabaz Goran, a freelance journalist, was abducted and beaten unconscious on 4 April 2007 by five armed men wearing uniforms in Erbil, northern Iraq. On 29 October 2009 he was again attacked and beaten by three unidentified men near his office.



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Sardar Qadir, a Kurdish opposition candidate, recovering after being shot in the leg by an unidentified attacker, December 2009.

Baghdad on 23 November 2009. He was shot in the head and neck, but survived. 'Emad 'Abadi presented a programme called *Thoughts without Fences* (*Afkar bila aswar*) in which he frequently criticized the authorities for mismanagement and corruption. He is also an outspoken defender of media freedom.

Representatives of the Iraqi Journalists' Association have also been targeted. On 23 February 2008, 74-year-old **Shihab al-Tamimi**, head of the association, was shot by unidentified gunmen while he was in his car after leaving the association's Baghdad office. He died of his injuries three days later. No one is known to have been charged or tried for the killing. He had received several death threats in connection with his work as head of the association. On 20 September 2008, his successor, **Mu'aid al-Lami**, survived a bomb attack near the organization's office.

Iraqi security forces have frequently ill-treated journalists. On 13 February 2009, for example, members of the Iraqi army beat journalist **Ahmed al-Azari** and other staff of al-Itijah TV after they had identified themselves as journalists and questioned a soldier's refusal to let them enter the city of Kerbela.

Reporters Without Borders reported numerous violent attacks against journalists in the Kurdistan Region in the context of the parliamentary elections in March 2010. For example, **Akar Fars** and **Rzgar Muhsin**, both journalists with Yekgirtu TV, which is affiliated to the opposition Kurdistan Islamic Union, were beaten by armed men and prevented from filming at a polling station in Erbil on 7 March, election day.

Kurdish journalists who have published articles critical of officials of the two ruling parties in the Kurdistan Region – the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) – continue to be at risk of threats and violent attacks.

Sabah 'Ali Qaraman, a 28-year-old journalist who published articles critical of Kurdish officials, was reported to have escaped an abduction attempt on 19 January 2010. Three men in a jeep stopped him outside his home in the Kifri district of Sulaimaniya governorate; he quickly realized that they intended to abduct him and managed to escape. He said that he recognized one of the attackers as a "retired official" of the PUK and later filed a complaint against him. As yet, the authorities are not known to have arrested the alleged assailant.

Nabaz Goran, a 32-year-old journalist with *Jihan* magazine who published numerous articles critical of the Kurdish leadership, was attacked on 29 October 2009 by three men near his office in the Iskan district of Erbil. The attackers – whom he believes were linked to the KDP – asked him for his name and then beat him on the head with a metal object. No one is known to have been arrested for the assault.

In another incident, a Kurdish journalist was killed in suspicious circumstances. **Souran Mama Hama**, a 23-year-old journalist with *Levin* magazine, was shot dead outside his parents' house in Kirkuk on 21 July 2008. His attackers were in a car and wore civilian clothes. Souran Mama Hama had published articles critical of alleged corruption and nepotism within the KDP and PUK, and was believed to have received anonymous death threats a few days before his murder. No one has been arrested for the killing.

POLITICAL ACTIVISTS

Violence against political activists in Iraq regularly increases in the run-up to elections. For example, at least nine candidates of different political parties standing in the provincial elections in January 2009 were killed.

Several more recent attacks were apparently linked to the 2010 parliamentary elections. For example, on 7 March, election day, dozens of people were killed in separate incidents, including bomb explosions at two residential buildings in Baghdad that alone killed at least 25 people.

On 7 February 2010, **Soha 'Abdul Jarallah**, a parliamentary candidate for the Iraqi National Movement, was killed in front of her relatives' home in the Ras al-Jadda district of Mosul. She was shot dead by unidentified gunmen who escaped in a car.

On 23 December 2009, **Sa'ud al-Issawi**, a candidate for Iraq's Unity Alliance, and his two bodyguards were killed in Falluja when a magnetic bomb attached to their vehicle exploded.

Safa 'Abd al-Amir al-Khafaji, the head teacher of a girls' school in Baghdad's al-Ghadi district, was shot and seriously wounded by unidentified gunmen on 12 November 2009 soon after she announced that she would contest the elections as a candidate for the Iraqi Communist Party.

Several activists of the newly established Kurdish opposition party, the Goran (Change) Movement, have also been attacked. In December 2009, at least five Goran activists were shot at in the Kurdistan Region. One of them, **Raouf Qadir Zaryani**, a former PUK supporter who had switched his political allegiance, was shot dead in front of his house on 25 December in Halabja Taze, Sulaimaniya governorate, by unidentified men in a vehicle.

Sardar Qadir, a businessman and Goran candidate in Iraq's parliamentary elections, was wounded in the leg on 4 December 2009 when he was shot at through a window at a relative's home in the Iskan district of Sulaimaniya. He told Amnesty International that he had not received threats but that he thought he had been followed in the preceding weeks and that the attack was politically motivated:

"I cannot put the blame on any particular party. However, I am a victim of the lack of democracy we are suffering from."

Dara Tawfiq, a military officer and former PUK supporter who switched to the Goran Movement, was attacked outside his house in the Bakhtiari district of Sulaimaniya on 7 October 2009. He told Amnesty International:

"I returned to my home at about 3pm and was about to open the gate when I was beaten with an iron rod. I turned around and protected my head with my arm. Blood was running from my head. I could see the two attackers, one of them tall the other short and with a moustache, who both spoke in the local dialect."

The two attackers escaped in a car driven by a third man who fired twice at a passer-by who had witnessed the attack. Dara Tawfiq had received no threats but believes that he was attacked because of his support for the Goran Movement.

The attacks continue. On 16 February 2010 armed men reportedly linked to the PUK violently disrupted a meeting of Goran Movement members in Sulaimaniya, following which 11 Goran activists were arrested. The office of the Kurdistan Islamic Union, another opposition party, was attacked by unidentified gunmen in Sulaimaniya on 14 February 2010; four days later several of its members were detained by the authorities in Dohuk.



© AP Photo/Mohammed Ibrahim

Rescuers digging through the remains of homes destroyed by a suicide truck bombing targeting predominantly Yazidi settlements in Sinjar district, north-west Iraq. The attack, on 14 August 2007, killed more than 400 people.

3/VIOLENCE AGAINST RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

Within weeks of the US-led invasion in 2003, members of religious and ethnic minority communities were targeted for violent attack, including abductions and killings.

For example, 271 members of the Sabeen-Mandaeen religion were abducted and 163 killed between May 2003 and October 2009, according to the Mandaean Associations Union.⁴ Some 65 attacks on Christian churches were recorded between mid-2004 and the end of 2009, causing dozens of casualties.⁵

Many other Christians have been killed in targeted attacks in the street or at their workplaces and homes. For example, on 22 February 2010 three members of a Christian family, 59-year-old **Aishwa Maroki** and his sons **Mokhlas** and **Bassim**, were killed in their house in the al-Saha district of Mosul by unidentified gunmen, apparently victims of a sectarian attack. They were among at least eight Christians killed in Mosul that month.

Four years before, the bombing in February 2006 of the al-Askari mosque in Samarra, one of Shi'a Islam's holiest sites, sparked an upsurge in sectarian violence between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. The violence left every Iraqi more at risk of attack simply on account of their religious identity and affiliation. In particular, places at which people gather to express their faith have been targeted for attacks. On 1 February 2010, for example, at least 40 Shi'a pilgrims were killed in a Baghdad neighbourhood by a suicide bomber.

A string of deadly attacks following the pull-out of US troops from Iraqi cities and towns in June 2009

exposed again the vulnerability of minority groups. More than a hundred people were killed between mid-July and mid-September 2009 in attacks targeting Christians, Sabeen-Mandaeans, Yazidis, Turkoman Shi'as, Shabaks and Kaka'is.

The deadliest attack on civilians in recent years happened on 14 August 2007, when more than 400 people were killed in four co-ordinated bombings in al-Qahtaniya and other villages in the Sinjar district, inhabited mainly by Yazidis.

The occupations, customs and general lack of political power of members of minority groups have contributed to their vulnerability. For example, many Sabeen-Mandaeans have been targeted by criminal or other armed groups or militias because of their traditional occupations as goldsmiths and jewellers. Similarly, the sale of alcohol has largely been the domain of Christians and Yazidis, making them a target for some Islamist armed groups and militias. However, survivors and witnesses of such attacks, including abductions, have frequently reported that the perpetrators "justified" their crimes on the basis of the victims' faith.

Others targeted have been women of religious minority groups who failed to adhere to a strict Islamic dress code. As well, members of minority groups perceived as supporters of the US-led foreign military forces that have been present in Iraq since 2003 have been attacked by armed groups and militias who accuse them of "collaboration" with enemy forces.

Religious or ethnic affiliation can often be discerned by knowing a person's name, and official identity cards state the religion of the holder. Several members of religious minorities told Amnesty International that they have sometimes feared to show their identity cards believing that if they did they would be attacked.

Such fears were underlined by an incident that followed the murder of a 16-year-old Yazidi girl, **Du'a Khalil**, by male relatives in early April 2007 in Bashiqa, near Mosul, for having a relationship with a Sunni Muslim man. Claims that Du'a Khalil had converted to Islam reportedly triggered the killing on 22 April of 23 Yazidi men who were travelling on a bus between Mosul and Bashiqa. The vehicle was stopped by gunmen, who identified Yazidi passengers by their identity cards, then forced them to disembark and killed them on the spot.

MINORITIES IN IRAQ

The Iraqi Constitution of 2005 states that Iraq comprises “multiple nations, religions and sects” (Article 3) and specifically lists some but not all minority groups. Article 2(2) refers to the “Islamic identity of the majority of the Iraqi people” and guarantees religious freedom to other religions, explicitly mentioning Christians, Sabeen-Mandaeans and Yazidis. The Constitution also specifies Arabic and Kurdish as the official languages and guarantees the rights of linguistic minorities to be educated in their mother tongue (Article 4(1)), referring specifically to Armenian, Syriac and Turkoman. Religious and ethnic minorities not mentioned in the Constitution include Baha’is, Jews, Kaka’is, Roma and Shabaks.

Iraqi election laws provide for parliamentary and local council seats to be reserved for representatives of minority groups. Legislation passed in November 2008 provides for a few seats to be reserved in the local councils of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul for minorities, including Christians, Sabeen-Mandaeans, Shabaks and Yazidis. The Kurdistan Regional Government has reserved 10 per cent of parliamentary seats for three minority groups – Assyro-Chaldaeans, Armenians and Turkomans.

Among the religious minorities, Christians and Yazidis are the largest groups with several hundred thousand members each. Other sizeable religious-ethnic minority groups include the Shabaks and the Kaka’is who live mainly in northern Iraq.

The Baha’i religion was banned in Iraq by law in 1970. A 1975 ban on issuing identity cards for Iraqis adhering to the Baha’i religion was lifted in April 2007, but obstacles continue to be reported.

Only a small number of Jews remained in Iraq following the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. The Iraqi Nationality Law (Law No. 26 of 2006) effectively excludes Jews who left Iraq from regaining Iraqi nationality.

On 17 February 2010, unidentified gunmen checked the identity cards of two Christian students – 22-year-old **Zia Toma** and 21-year-old **Ramsin Shmael** – at a bus stop in Mosul and subsequently shot them.⁶ Zia Toma was killed and Ramsin Shmael was injured but survived.

The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief stated: “Indicating a person’s religious affiliation on official documents carries a serious risk of abuse or subsequent discrimination based on religion or belief, which has to be weighed against the possible reasons for disclosing the holder’s religion.”⁷

FLIGHT AND DISPLACEMENT

Fear for their lives has driven a disproportionately high number of members of minority communities to flee Iraq in recent years. The UN Secretary-General, reporting on the situation in Iraq in July 2009, noted that “the recent surge in violence, particularly against minorities, has led to a continuation of Iraqis leaving the country as well as some internal displacement.”⁸

Amnesty International has interviewed many Iraqi refugees in recent years, including in neighbouring countries where hundreds of thousands are still living. Some say they were targeted because of their religion or because they were unwilling to convert to Islam.

A 25-year-old engineer and member of the Sabeen-Mandaeen religion who had fled to Jordan told Amnesty International in March 2009 that he had feared to divulge his religion when studying at a Baghdad university before graduating in 2007. Later, after he tried to flee the country but was denied entry to Syria, he got a job in a restaurant where other workers told him he should convert to Islam and attend prayers when they found out his faith. He did not do so. Later, in August 2008, he was abducted, as he made his way home from work, by masked men who forced him into a car. They blindfolded him and drove to an unknown location where they held him prisoner. They then stripped, raped and beat him until he lost consciousness while demanding that he convert to Islam. They later dumped him on a road.



After fleeing to Jordan in December 2008, he told Amnesty International:

"I was so scared the abductors would kill me. I believe they dumped me alive because they were nervous to be discovered by security forces operating in the area."

A 58-year-old Christian, a retired nurse who is married with three children, told Amnesty International that she fled Iraq the day after she and her husband were attacked at their home in Mosul by four masked men in February 2007. Her husband was beaten and kicked, and she was threatened at gunpoint. The couple was given 24 hours to convert to Islam or leave their house. The nurse told Amnesty International:

"We hired a taxi that took us the next day early in the morning to Syria. We left everything behind."

A human rights defender, a member of Iraq's Christian minority, spoke to Amnesty International in Erbil in December 2009 soon after she had fled from Mosul. She had remained in Mosul in 2008 despite a wave of attacks on Christians that year which prompted an estimated 12,000 people to flee their homes. She finally decided to flee because of her fear that rising political tension in the run-up to the March 2010

The aftermath of a double truck bombing which killed at least 34 people on 10 August 2009 in Khazna, a predominantly Shabak village, near Mosul.



A Sabean-Mandaean goldsmith from Baghdad, who escaped to Jordan with his four children in January 2009 after his wife was abducted. He told Amnesty International shortly afterwards: “I don’t let the children leave the home – because I still believe I am in Iraq and I am scared about their safety.”

parliamentary elections would further expose members of minority groups to attack. Since she fled, violence against the Christian community in Mosul had indeed increased, including fatal bomb attacks on churches on 15 and 23 December 2009.

TERRITORIAL DISPUTES

Violence between different ethnic communities in the north of Iraq, where control over territory is disputed mainly between Kurds, Arabs and Turkomans, broke out shortly after the March 2003 invasion.

The conflicts are rooted in the past expulsion by the central Iraqi authorities of local Kurds and other minority communities and their replacement with Arabs from central and southern Iraq. During the so-called Anfal campaign in the late 1980s, tens of thousands of Kurdish civilians were victims of enforced disappearance, and many were killed by Iraqi forces in mass executions, ground offensives and bombardments, including some using chemical weapons. The violence resulted in the mass displacement of Kurds as well as other minorities. Tens of thousands of other people – mainly Kurds – were forcibly displaced in the 1990s from Kirkuk and other now “disputed territories”. Many of the displaced have not been able to return to their places of origin.

The 2005 Constitution envisaged a process to address past injustices, allow displaced people to return or receive compensation, and conduct a census followed by a referendum in the “disputed territories”, including Kirkuk, before the end of 2007 (Article 140). However, neither the census nor the referendum has been held. The lack of clarity about the future status of the “disputed territories” is fuelling violence and tensions. The Kurdish authorities have expanded their de facto control and influence over much of the “disputed territories”. Meanwhile, the return of displaced Kurds to the governorate of Kirkuk has prompted protests by other minority groups, particularly the Turkoman and Arab communities.

In the “disputed territories”, members of religious and ethnic minority groups are increasingly becoming pawns in a power struggle between an Arab-dominated central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. This has led or contributed to divisions



within the minority communities, including their competing political parties. The Kurdish authorities have supported the establishment of self-defence militias that are mainly deployed at the entrances of Christian villages and churches, despite protests expressed within the Christian communities.

Members of minority groups who have been critical of Kurdish attempts to expand influence in the “disputed territories” have reported harassment and ill-treatment by Kurdish security forces, particularly before recent elections. For example, **Murad Kashti al-Asi**, a Yazidi political activist in Sinjar, Nineva governorate, who is opposed to the Kurdish political parties, was reported to have been detained several times and threatened and ill-treated. His most recent period of detention, in November 2008, appeared to be linked to the provincial elections.⁹

There have also been incidents reported of Iraqi authorities intimidating and harassing the Kurdish population in “disputed territories”. In October 2008, for instance, Iraqi security forces were reported to have

Cover of a book showing Ragheed Ghanni, a priest killed in June 2007 by unidentified gunmen in Mosul.

raided and harassed the Kurdish population of Qaratepe village.¹⁰

A draft constitution of the Kurdistan Region passed in July 2009 listed areas that the Kurdish authorities envisaged would be annexed to the Kurdistan Region. This led to protests from officials of the central government in Baghdad, further heightening political tension. Organizations representing ethnic and religious minorities have also protested against the territorial claims made in the draft constitution.



Poster by the Kurdish women's organization Khatuzeen, campaigning against "honour killings".

4/VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Wars and conflicts, wherever they are fought, invariably usher in sickeningly high levels of violence against women and girls. All parties to the armed conflict in Iraq have been involved in violent crimes specifically aimed at women and girls, including rape. Perpetrators have included members of armed groups, militias, Iraqi government forces and foreign military forces. In addition, women and girls continue to be attacked and sometimes killed by male relatives and Islamist armed groups or militias for their perceived or alleged transgression of traditional roles or moral codes. Most of these crimes are committed with impunity.

Crimes of sexual violence against women in Iraq are grossly under-reported, not least because of the victims' fear of reprisal, and reported incidents are not systematically recorded.

Amnesty International has interviewed several traumatized women survivors of rape who subsequently fled Iraq. One of them, who did not file a complaint about her rape with the Iraqi authorities, told Amnesty International in June 2007:

"I feared that my brother-in-law would kill me if he found out that I had been raped. When his family wanted to have me medically examined, I refused. Instead, I had to swear that I had not been raped. There was no one I could tell what had happened."

Women have been raped in Iraqi detention centres, according to various reports. In 2007 the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) reported that its staff had interviewed several women and girls detained

at the Women's Prison of al-Kadhimiya in Baghdad who said that they had been beaten, raped or otherwise sexually abused in police stations.¹¹ Subsequently, members of the Iraqi parliament's Human Rights Committee who visited the prison in May 2009 told the media that at least three women detainees had complained of being raped in detention – apparently prior to their transfer to the prison.

Few men who have committed rape in Iraq are known to have been convicted. However, in one rare but widely publicized case, several US soldiers were prosecuted in the USA in connection with the rape and murder of 14-year-old **'Abeer Qassim Hamza al-Janabi** and the murders of her parents and sister in March 2006 in Mahmoudiya, near Baghdad. Steven Dale Green, held to be the principal perpetrator, was sentenced to life imprisonment on 21 May 2009.

Patterns of gender discrimination and violence that are evident beforehand frequently become more acute during periods of armed conflict. This has been the case in Iraq, where the majority of women who responded to a survey conducted through networks of Iraqi women's organizations and published in 2008 said they considered that violence against women was rising.¹²

Many Iraqi women and girls are subjected to harmful traditional practices, including forced and early marriage. Female genital mutilation is reported to be widely practised in Kurdish areas. The Iraqi authorities are aware of such practices but do little to stop them.

Iraqi women human rights defenders say that many abused wives were forced to marry – often as a teenager without obtaining the judicial approval formally required under Iraqi law for a marriage of anyone aged between 15 and 18. Marriages of girls younger than 15 are illegal but they continue to be conducted in private or religious ceremonies without those responsible being held to account.

Women are also suffering violence at the hands of their fathers, brothers and other relatives, particularly if they try to go against the wishes of the family. Many face terrible retribution if they refuse to be forcibly married or dare to associate with men not selected by their families. This is despite Iraqi legislation that specifically prohibits forced marriage, and international law, applicable in all parts of Iraq, that guarantees the right to choose a spouse.

Kurdistan Aziz from the Kolkarash village near Heran, Erbil governorate, was 16 years old when she disappeared in May 2008. She has not been seen since and is believed to have been murdered. In February 2008 she had run away with a young man she loved to Erbil, where both were detained in a form of protective custody by the Kurdistan Region authorities. However, at the end of February she returned to her parents' home after they signed an agreement guaranteeing her safety. On 21 May 2008 her father informed the local police that his nephew had called him and had confessed to her murder. At the beginning of 2010 the suspected perpetrator of the crime remained at large.

LICENSED TO KILL WOMEN

Women continue to be killed with impunity by their relatives because their behaviour is perceived to have infringed traditional codes. In 2008 the Iraqi authorities recorded 56 so-called honour killings of women in the nine southern governorates.

Most men get away with these murders because the authorities are unwilling to carry out proper investigations and punish the perpetrators. Iraqi legislators have failed to amend laws that effectively condone, even facilitate, such violence against women and girls.

The Penal Code, for example, provides that a convicted murderer who pleads in mitigation that he killed with "honourable motives" (Article 128) may face just six months in prison. The Code also effectively allows a husband to use violence against his wife. The "exercise of a legal right" to exemption from criminal liability is permitted for: "Disciplining a wife by her husband, the disciplining by parents and teachers of children under their authority within certain limits prescribed by Islamic law (Shari'a), by law or by custom" (Article 41).

As a result, police frequently fail to arrest men accused of violence against their female relatives. In the rare cases when they do and prosecutions are mounted, judges often hand down disproportionately lenient sentences, even when a woman has been murdered. This sends out a terrifying message to all women in Iraq – that they may be killed and beaten with impunity.

The Kurdistan Regional Government, however, has amended the Penal Code to remove the "honourable motive" clause in cases involving crimes against

women (Law 14 of 2002). This has been reflected in some recent court rulings.

INSUFFICIENT PROTECTION

Some women do escape violence and seek refuge in special shelters, but there are far too few of these. In the Kurdistan Region, several shelters have been established by the authorities and NGOs. In the rest of Iraq, however, the authorities do not provide shelters and those that do exist are run by NGOs and often have to function more or less clandestinely.

Even women and girls who have obtained emergency protection remain at risk as refuge locations, including private houses, have been attacked by their male relatives. All shelters in Iraq can be seen as no more than short- or medium-term "solutions" and cannot provide a durable resolution for women at risk.

In the Kurdistan Region, shelter staff, police officers and community leaders are involved in negotiations about the return of a woman at risk to her family. The family is usually required to sign a commitment not to harm her. However, in a number of cases women have been attacked and even killed by relatives who had pledged to do the women no harm.

5/ATTACKS ON GAY MEN

Members of the gay community in Iraq live under constant threat. They are confronted by widespread intolerance towards their sexual identity and scores of men who were, or were perceived to be, gay have been killed in recent years, some after torture. Violent acts against gay men have occurred against a background of frequent public statements by some Muslim clerics and others condemning homosexuality.¹³

Attacks against gay men, including killings, have frequently been reported since the 2003 invasion. **Qassim**, a 40-year-old hairdresser from Baghdad and refugee in Jordan, told Amnesty International in June 2006 about several incidents targeting gay men that occurred in August and September 2004 in Baghdad:

"I was at a gym with my boyfriend. When he returned to my car to get me a bottle of water he was shot dead outside the gym. I was terrified and went into hiding."

About two weeks later two of his friends were killed in Baghdad. A few days later an explosive device was thrown at his car and he decided to leave Iraq.

The UN reported that at least 12 people were killed because of their sexual orientation between October 2005 and May 2006, during which a *fatwa* appeared on the website of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani calling for the killing of homosexuals "in the most severe way".¹⁴

During the first few months of 2009 at least 25 men and boys were killed in Baghdad because of their sexual orientation or gender expression. This was most common in the predominantly Shi'a district of al-Sadr City. According to reports, the perpetrators were their relatives and members of the Mahdi Army, followers of

Moqtada al-Sadr, a Shi'a cleric and political leader. Many of the victims were tortured and their bodies mutilated and dumped in the streets. Many other men and boys fled Iraq after receiving death threats.

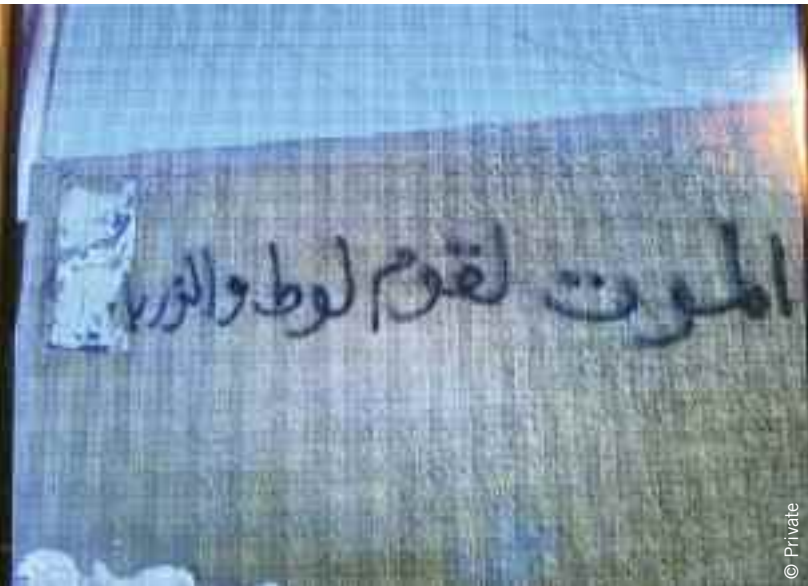
In April 2009 Amnesty International interviewed several Iraqis who had recently fled due to the violence they were facing because they were gay men. **Hakim**, a 34-year-old man from Najaf, reported that his partner had been kidnapped and abused by members of the Mahdi Army in October 2008, apparently after they found out about their secret relationship. Following his release, both men received death threats from the Mahdi Army, including on one occasion a note that was delivered with three bullets.

A 41-year-old gay man from the Hayy Ur district of Baghdad told Human Rights Watch that a friend of his, a gay man, was attacked and killed in February 2009 by members of the Mahdi Army while he was walking in the neighbourhood with friends. The man himself later survived an abduction by members of the Mahdi Army, who forced him at gunpoint out of his store on 6 March 2009. During his abduction, the militia abused him, including by beating him unconscious and raping him with a broomstick. He was released after his family paid a ransom, but the abductors threatened to kill him if he left the house after his return. For one month he did not leave the house until he fled Baghdad.¹⁵

The wave of attacks on gay men in early 2009 coincided with statements by Muslim clerics, particularly in al-Sadr City, urging their followers to take action to eradicate homosexuality from Iraqi society. They used language that effectively constituted incitement to violence against men known or alleged to be gay.

LICENSED TO KILL GAY MEN

Gay men face similar discrimination as women under the legislation that provides for lenient sentences for those committing crimes with an "honourable motive". Iraqi courts continue to interpret provisions of Article 128 of the Penal Code as justification for giving drastically reduced sentences to defendants who have attacked or even killed gay men they are related to if they say that they acted to "wash off the shame". In its rulings, the Iraqi Court of Cassation has confirmed that the killing of a male relative who is suspected of



Graffiti in Kufa, Najaf governorate, photographed by mobile phone, April 2009. It reads: "Death to gays and dirty people".

same-sex sexual conduct is considered a crime with an "honourable motive", thus qualifying for a reduced sentence under Article 128.¹⁶

Although provisions under Articles 128 have been amended in the Kurdistan Region by Law 14 of 2002 and, therefore, may no longer be applied in connection with crimes committed against women there, they continue to be applicable throughout the whole of Iraq in connection with crimes against gay men.

For example, on 24 October 2005 the Court of Cassation of the Kurdistan Region confirmed the conviction for murder and one-year prison sentence imposed on a man from Koysinjak who had confessed to killing his gay brother earlier in 2005. The court found that he had killed his brother with "honourable motives" because he "wanted to end the shame which the victim [of the crime] had brought over his family by practicing depravity and by being engaged in homosexuality and prostitution." The court also accepted that a one-year prison sentence was in this case appropriate for premeditated murder, a crime which carries the death penalty.

Impunity or, at most, a disproportionately lenient prison sentence for the murder of gay men by their relatives, appears to be the rule rather than the exception in Iraq.

NO PROTECTION

A group of gay men reportedly provide emergency shelter at secret locations in Baghdad for individuals who are at risk. However, members of the gay community under threat of attack or murder cannot expect any assistance from the authorities, even when urgent protection is needed.

On the contrary, members of the security forces and possibly other authorities appear in some cases to have encouraged the targeting of people suspected of same-sex relationships, in blatant violation of the law and international human rights standards. For example, a senior police officer in the Karada district of Baghdad was reported to have told the media that "homosexuality is against the law" and that the police were involved in a "campaign to clean up the streets and get the beggars and homosexuals off them."¹⁷

6/DISPLACED PEOPLE

About 2.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) are living in Iraq, including about 1 million who have been displaced since before 2003. In addition, there are an estimated 1.5 million Iraqi refugees, mainly in neighbouring countries. Mass displacement, both internally and abroad, was particularly triggered by the February 2006 bombing of the al-Askari mosque in Samarra and the ensuing sectarian violence.

Many displaced people in Iraq face economic hardship and lack of basic services, including access to clean water and health services. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in two-thirds of surveyed families who were displaced after February 2006 all family members of working age were unemployed.

Because of lack of choice, many IDPs have settled in unsafe locations. Among them are about 400 families living in the Shu'ala district of Baghdad in a compound that is frequently targeted in rocket attacks.¹⁸

IDPs are also frequently threatened with eviction where they have settled on property claimed by others. Evictions are facilitated by Prime Minister Order 101, which also provides for subsidies for those evicted. However, not all evicted IDPs have received such financial assistance.

In April 2009, the IOM reported on about 250 IDP families who were facing eviction in five different locations, including 40 families in Najaf who could not afford to pay for their housing. In October 2009, it reported that about 70 families in the Qassim sub-district of the governorate of Babil who built houses on land they do not own were at risk of eviction.



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The poor Baghdad suburb of Chikook, where thousands of displaced people live without adequate drinking water, a sewage system or other basic services.

RETURNING DESPITE THE DANGER

There have been frequent reports of attacks on IDPs attempting to return to their homes. In some incidents, returning IDPs have been killed. For example, in March 2009, two IDP families failed in their attempt to return from the Kirkuk governorate to their homes in Diyala governorate when two members of the families were killed in a militia attack.

According to estimates by the UN refugee agency UNHCR, about 200,000 displaced people returned to their homes in 2009, including about 37,000 refugees from outside Iraq.¹⁹ However, according to an IOM survey of about 4,000 returnee families, 38 per cent said they felt safe "only some of the time". Furthermore, 34 per cent reported that their homes had been completely or partially destroyed. Other major concerns for returnees included food insecurity, lack of water and energy supplies, and unemployment.



Iraqi police and security forces confront residents in Camp Ashraf, July 2009.

Several Iraqi refugees who had returned to Iraq or intended to do so imminently, told Amnesty International that their decision was driven by their lack of resources or that they could not legally reside in a host country.

Majid, a 62-year-old retired army officer and widower from Baghdad, said that he had fled to Syria after two of his nephews were beheaded by members of an armed group or militia in December 2007. However, after he discovered that his family could not join him and having exhausted his meagre savings, he decided to return, even though he was extremely scared to do so.

Muhsin, a former interpreter for the Multinational Force from Mosul, decided to return in February 2009 to see his family in Baghdad after he had spent two years in several European countries without his asylum claim having been accepted – although Iraqis who worked with the Multinational Force are considered to be at particular risk. On his arrival at Baghdad airport, security officers questioned him about his stay in Europe and why he had travelled to Baghdad instead of Mosul. He was beaten, threatened with detention and forced to hand over about US\$1,300 before he was released the next day. About a month later he was visited by police at his rented apartment in Baghdad and taken into custody. He was held at a detention centre in Baghdad for about a week where he was threatened with indefinite detention, beaten and subjected to other abuses. He was released after a US officer intervened on his behalf. In June 2009, he and his family fled Iraq.

Despite the ongoing violence in Iraq, several European governments continue to forcibly return rejected Iraqi asylum-seekers to Iraq. In 2009, the authorities in Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK forcibly returned scores of Iraqis to unsafe parts of Iraq, such as central Iraq, in breach of UNHCR guidelines. For example, on 15 October 2009 UK authorities forcibly deported 44 rejected Iraqi asylum-seekers to Baghdad; the Iraqi authorities allowed only 10 of them to enter. The Norwegian authorities forcibly returned 30 Iraqis to Baghdad in December 2009 and 13 in January 2010. In February 2010 Iraqi Vice-President Tariq al-Hashemi urged European governments not to deport Iraqi asylum-seekers to Iraq until security and economic conditions had improved.



VIOLENCE AGAINST REFUGEES

In addition to internally displaced Iraqis, there are about 35,000 refugees from other countries registered by the UNHCR in Iraq. The largest groups are Palestinians as well as Turkish and Iranian nationals.

Gross human rights violations against Palestinians, including killings, since the US-led invasion in 2003 have led to a reduction in the number of Palestinian refugees in Iraq from 34,000 to 12,000. Palestinians have been threatened, abducted, tortured and killed, mainly by Shi'a militias. They have been targeted because of their ethnic identity and because they are reputed to have received preferential treatment under the former Ba'ath government in Iraq.

Many of the thousands of Palestinians who have sought to flee Iraq have been denied entry into neighbouring countries and have ended up in makeshift camps near the border where conditions are harsh. Some residents of these camps have been resettled, but al-Waleed camp on the Iraqi-Syrian border continues to host mainly Palestinian refugees.

Other vulnerable refugees are some 3,400 members or supporters of the People's Mojahedeen Organization of

Iraqi police and security forces confront residents in Camp Ashraf, July 2009.

Iran (PMOI), an Iranian opposition group, who are living in Camp Ashraf in Diyala governorate. Following months of rising tension, Iraqi security forces forcibly entered and took control of the camp, which had been under US military control until June 2009, on 28 and 29 July 2009. Video footage taken as Iraqi security forces entered the camp showed them deliberately driving military vehicles into crowds of protesting residents. They used live ammunition, apparently killing at least nine refugees, and detained 36 others who they subsequently tortured. The 36 were taken to al-Khalis police station in Diyala, where they mounted a hunger strike, and were then moved to Baghdad despite repeated judicial orders for their release. They were freed and allowed to return to Camp Ashraf in October after an international campaign for their release. However, in early 2010 the authorities were reported to be insisting that the camp residents move to another location in southern Iraq.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Amnesty International makes the following recommendations which are essential if Iraqis are to live in safety and to fully to exercise their human rights.

TO THE ARMED GROUPS AND MILITIAS

- End all attacks on civilians and other human rights abuses, including abductions, hostage-taking, and the killing, torture and other ill-treatment of captives.

TO THE IRAQI AUTHORITIES

- Exercise due diligence and protect the human rights of all civilians in Iraq.
- Review and improve protection measures for human rights defenders, other critical voices and vulnerable groups, including by consultation with representatives of groups at risk.
- End discrimination, including with regard to protection measures, on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, origin, colour, religion, sect, belief or opinion, or economic or social status – as required by Iraqi and international law.
- Ensure prompt, impartial and thorough investigations into all attacks on and other violent crimes against civilians, and bring those responsible to justice in conformity with international law and without recourse to the death penalty.
- Immediately disarm all militias.
- Train and instruct law enforcement personnel to identify at risk individuals or groups and ensure effective protection measures.
- End the indication of the holder's religion on identity cards in light of the risk of grave human rights abuses entailed in the inclusion of religious affiliation on identity cards, in consultation with religious minority communities.
- Abolish legislation that provides disproportionately lenient sentences for perpetrators claiming

“honourable motives” for crimes against women and members of the gay community perceived to be transgressing traditional gender roles or moral codes.

- Ban or enforce existing bans on harmful traditional practices for girls, namely female genital mutilation and forced and early marriages.
- Provide assistance to all displaced people, including shelter, health care and other essential needs.
- Do not forcibly return any refugees or asylum-seekers to countries where they are at risk of human rights violations.

TO IRAQ'S RELIGIOUS, COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL LEADERS

- Speak out against intolerance and violent attacks against anyone, including those perceived to be transgressing moral codes or traditional gender roles.

TO THE UNITED STATES FORCES-IRAQ

- Exercise due diligence and protect the human rights of all civilians in Iraq.
- Ensure prompt, impartial and thorough investigations into all attacks on and other violent crimes against civilians by US forces, and bring those responsible to justice in conformity with international law and without recourse to the death penalty.

TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

- End all forcible returns to any part of Iraq; any return of rejected asylum-seekers should only take place when the security situation in the whole country has stabilized.
- Provide financial, technical and in-kind assistance to refugee-hosting states in the region, UNHCR and other organizations providing assistance to refugees from Iraq.
- Share the responsibility by resettling refugees from Iraq currently in the region, giving priority to the most vulnerable cases.



A former resident of al-Tanf refugee camp, which was closed in February 2010, is reunited with her brother in al-Hol camp, northern Syria. The pair had not seen each other since 2006.

ENDNOTES

- 1 For a more detailed assessment of at risk categories, see: UNHCR: *Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*, April 2009.
- 2 Front Line, *Iraq, Testimonies of Iraqi Human Rights Defenders*, July 2008, p10.
- 3 Committee to Protect Journalists, <http://cpj.org/reports/2008/07/journalists-killed-in-iraq.php>
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- 5 Assyrian International News Agency, "Church bombings in Iraq since 2004", 25 December 2009.
- 6 Human Rights Watch, *Iraq: Protect Christians from violence*, 23 February 2010.
- 7 UN document A/63/161, 22 July 2008.
- 8 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of the resolution 1830 (2008), 30 July 2009, S/2009/393, para 25.
- 9 Laila Fadhel, "Kurdish expansion squeezes northern Iraq's minorities", *McClatchy* newspaper, 12 November 2008.
- 10 UNHCR, *UNHCR: Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*, April 2009, para 301.
- 11 UNAMI, *Human Rights Report*, 1 April-30 June 2007.
- 12 Women for Women International, *Stronger Women Stronger Nations*, 2008 Iraq report, p20.
- 13 For safety reasons, the names of individuals in this and the following chapter have been changed.
- 14 UNHCR, *Situation of Lesbians, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Iraqis*, June 2006, p3.
- 15 Human Rights Watch, "*They want us exterminated*": *Murder, torture, sexual orientation and gender in Iraq*, August 2009, pp17-18.
- 16 Dr Himdad Majeed Ali Marzani, *Murder for Honor (al-qatl bi-dafi' al-sharaf)*, Sulaimaniya, 2007, pp392-397.
- 17 Timothy Williams and Tareq Maher, "Iraq's Newly Open Gays Face Scorn and Murder", *New York Times*, 7 April 2009.
- 18 IOM data in this section from the IOM's Emergency needs assessments in 2009.
- 19 UNHCR Iraq, *Factsheet*, December 2009.



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Above: Thousands of people gather in Copenhagen on 18 August 2009 to protest against the forcible return to Baghdad of Iraqis who had sought asylum in Denmark.
Cover: A man sits among the ruins of Wardak, a village near Mosul whose inhabitants mostly belong to the Kaka'i minority, after a pre-dawn suicide truck bombing on 10 September 2009 which killed at least 16 people.
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**AMNESTY
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Amnesty International
International Secretariat
Peter Benenson House
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom
www.amnesty.org