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3.12.3. Child recruitment

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: November 2024

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI report: Country Focus 2024, 1.4.1. Country Guidance should not be referred to as source of COI.

Child recruitment by multiple armed groups operating in Iraq had been reported, mostly in the past years. Efforts have been made by the government to prevent child recruitment.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Child recruitment amounts to persecution. Instances of child recruitment has been reported in Iraq. The UN verified a total of 32 cases of children (18 boys and 14 girls, as young as age 11) being recruited in 2022, 28 of whom were recruited by the PKK and 4 by ISIL. The UN has conditionally delisted the PMF for the violation of recruitment and use of children.

Young boys who were formerly recruited and who suffer from complex trauma or other medical conditions often do not have access to adequate rehabilitation, reintegration and mental health programmes, which exposes them to re-victimisation and re-recruitment.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

Given that the intensity of armed confrontations and military operations has declined significantly and based on the COI that child recruitment at the moment seldom occurs, it appears that **well-founded fear of persecution would only be substantiated in exceptional cases.**

The individual assessment of whether, **in exceptional cases**, there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for a child to face persecution in relation to child recruitment should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Gender:** Child recruitment would be more relevant for boys.

- **Home area in relation to presence/influence of armed groups:** Recruitment by the PKK or ISIL could be relevant for areas where these groups are present. For ISIL presence see 2.4. Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and for the PKK see 4.3.3.a) Security situation in Iraq: recent events.

- **Ethnic/religious background:** Kurds may be targeted by the PKK and Sunni Arabs by ISIL.

- **Age:** Being an adolescent or of 'fighting age' may put the applicant at risk.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where, in exceptional cases, well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for a child in relation to child recruitment, the individual circumstances of the child need to be taken into account to determine whether a nexus to a reason for persecution can be substantiated.

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