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3.11.4. Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: January 2021
Minor updates added: November 2024

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI report and query: Country Focus 2024, 1.3; FGM 2019. Country Guidance should not be referred to as source of COI.

Formally, FGM/C has been criminalised in the KRI but not in Federal Iraq.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

FGM/C, still taking place primarily in northern Iraq, is of such severe nature that it would amount to persecution.

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

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for a woman or girl to face persecution in relation to FGM/C should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Home area:** Older sources of 2016-2017, indicated that FGM was not limited to the KRI but was taking place also in the rest of Iraq. A source of 2023 reported that, outside the KRI, FGM/C was not common. While the practice of FGM continues to decline in the KRI, it is still practiced in some rural communities. Its prevalence in the KRI is reported higher in the governorates of Sulaymaniyah and Erbil, while in Dohuk it is reported as rare.

- **Age:** The majority of FGM/C are performed on minors.

- **Ethnicity:** Kurdish women are the most affected by the FGM practice in Iraq. As reported in 2013, generally, Arab girls did not undergo FGM, however, studies showed that women

living in Kurdish dominated areas in Kirkuk and Garmian to a certain extent suffered the practice as well.

- **Religion:** As reported in 2012, the practice was most common among Sunni Muslims, but it was also practised by Shia and Kaka'i.

- **Perception of traditional gender roles in the (extended) family:** As reported in 2016, the procedure could be decided on by a wide variety of persons e.g. the woman's husband, the husband's family, the woman's parents, the woman herself and by someone else. Many mothers who forced their daughters to undergo FGM reported that they carried out the procedure out of family pressure.

- **Level of education:** As reported in 2012, the level of education also played a role in the FGM rate.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for a woman or a girl in relation to FGM/C, this may be for reasons of membership of a particular social group. This may apply for instance to women not formerly subjected to FGM, as they may be stigmatised by the surrounding society for this exact reason. Religion may also be a relevant ground as tradition and religion were mentioned as the main reasons for practicing FGM/C.

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