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6.4.2. Individual circumstances

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: November 2024

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports: Country Focus 2024, 1.2.1, 1.3.2, 1.4., 2.1.1, 2.3.1; KSEI 2020, 1.1, 1.6. Country Guidance should not be referred to as source of COI.

In addition to the general situation in the area of potential IPA, the assessment of whether it is reasonable to settle in that part of the country should take into account the individual circumstances of the applicant.

The individual considerations may encompass the ethno-religious background and potential vulnerabilities of the applicant as well as the availability of coping mechanisms. A non-exhaustive list of relevant considerations is provided below:

- **Ethno-religious background:** The ethno-religious background of the applicant and their linguistic knowledge are determinative when assessing the reasonableness of IPA in parts of Iraq. Members of ethnic and religious groups would face discrimination and difficulties relocating and assimilating into an area dominated by another group, especially without familial, tribal, or political networks. Members of religious minority groups continue to experience social, political and economic disenfranchisement along with prejudice and restrictions on their freedom of religion or belief.

- **Support network:** The availability, capacity and willingness of the family/social network to assist should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Recourse to non-State support networks represents the most frequent coping mechanism adopted by all categories of the population to access social protection and economic resources. Family connections play an important role in the Iraqi society, particularly in terms of finding employment and affordable housing. Personal connections are often a prerequisite for securing employment. Support networks are also linked to sectarian political connections, since political parties are the main vehicles through which accessing state resources, such as jobs in the public sector, various social assistance schemes and all administrative services. Minority religious and ethnic groups typically often lack political networks.

- **Family status:** Basic subsistence has to be ensured for all immediate family members. Single individuals, in particular single women, may face difficulties to relocate and settle without a support network. Additional obstacles may be related to the family status of the woman, such as being a single mother or a widow, a wife or former wife of an ISIL fighter, etc. Generally, in Iraq, single men, especially those belonging to some ethnic minorities in some areas (e.g. Arab and Turkmens in KRI), are reported to face restrictions to rent a house.

- **Gender:** Women and girls in Iraq may be subjected to discriminatory restrictions and may need the support of a male family member in order to access different services and exercise certain rights. Women and girls encounter additional difficulties, such as in relation to education, work and housing. Prevailing social, religious and cultural norms remain obstacles for women living independently, especially for unmarried women. Women without the support of a male member of their family or tribe often face stigmatisation from their families and from society; they are vulnerable to economic insecurity and are at a higher risk of sexual exploitation and trafficking. Women and girls may also face restrictions on freedom of movement. Therefore, the gender of the applicant should be taken into account when considering reasonableness in conjunction with their family status and available support.

- **Age:** Young age as well as elderly age could significantly limit the applicant’s access to means of subsistence, such as through employment, making them dependent on other providers, or exposing them to child recruitment and child exploitation. Therefore, this element should be seen in conjunction with the available support network. In the case of children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration, for example with regard to access to civil documentation and basic education. For example, children of families affiliated with ISIL face challenges to access civil documentation, depriving them of access to education and putting them at risk of statelessness.

- **Civil documentation:** In Iraq, only the Housing Card, issued in or transferred to the individual's location, enables permanent settlement and grants access to full rights and basic services, including health, education, food rations, civil documentation, voting, employment, rental agreements, and property purchases. Certain groups in Iraqi society, such as IDPs, returnees, women (especially in female-headed households), children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups, are particularly vulnerable and socio-economically disadvantaged. Those without identity or civil documentation face restricted movement, limited access to basic services and social security, and a higher risk of arbitrary arrest. Additionally, individuals perceived to be affiliated with ISIL encounter extra administrative and security barriers to obtaining civil documentation. Women’s ability to access services may be further impacted by the difficulty to obtain death or missing person certificates for their husbands or fathers.

- **Health status:** The quality of, and access to healthcare is strained in various areas of Iraq, making therefore the health status of the applicant and any need for medical treatment an important consideration when assessing the reasonableness of IPA. Health status may also affect the ability to work and, for minors, it may affect their access to education. For persons with disabilities, access to basic subsistence such as through employment would be further limited.

- **Professional and educational background and financial means:** The professional background of the applicant, their level of education and available financial means should be taken into account when assessing the reasonableness of IPA, in particular access to basic means of subsistence. Corruption also affects the quality of basic services, and bribes may be required to access them.

These factors above would often intersect, leading to different conclusions on the reasonableness of IPA. In some cases, more than one element of vulnerability would indicate that IPA is not reasonable for the particular applicant (e.g. individual from an ethno-religious minority without a support network), while in other cases, the relevant factors may balance each other (e.g. elderly person with a support network).

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