Please cite as: EUAA, '2.2. Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF)' in *Country Guidance: Iraq*, November 2024.

2.2. Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF)

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: November 2024

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports: Security 2024, 1.4; Country Focus 2024, 1.1.1, 1.1.3, 1.2, 1.6; Arab Tribes 2023, 6.1. Country Guidance should not be referred to as source of COI.

The PMF are an umbrella organisation consisting of many different militias. Most of the militias are Shia, however, there are also smaller militias made up of Sunnis or other minority groups. Some militia groups still exist outside the official PMF structure. Iraqi official reports indicate the number of registered PMF personnel to range between 204 000 to 238 000 but their actual number is believed to be higher. Tribal militias also exist, however, it has become hard to separate them from the PMF since they are deeply connected.

The PMF has continued their anti-ISIL operations while they have gradually expanded their influence over the Iraqi state. Although the PMF are legally a State institution, in practice they retain highly autonomous control and influence. The PMF are heterogenous in nature and maintain different alliances, with some prominent militias receiving orders from Iran. Internal rivalries within PMF ranks are still reported. Since the end of major fighting operations against ISIL, the PMF have dominated the security sector in the liberated governorates of Ninewa, Anbar and Salah-al-din. In the wake of the resurgence of the Israel-Hamas conflict a loose coalition of Iranian-backed militias, called Islamic Resistance in Iraq, emerged and began carrying out attacks on US personnel.

Members of the PMF have reportedly committed various human rights violations, such as unlawful killings, disappearances, revenge attacks, abuses and torture during arrests and pre-trial detention, against persons perceived to be affiliated with ISIL (see 3.1. Persons perceived to be affiliated with ISIL). PMF have also engaged in violence against ethnic and religious minorities (see 3.10. Religious and ethnic minorities). Furthermore, PMF and other militias have targeted individuals perceived to transgress moral or religious codes and have reportedly also committed other abuses, such as violence against protesters (see 3.8. Individuals perceived to transgress moral codes and 3.3. Human rights and political opposition activists, protesters and other perceived critics of the authorities). The involvement of the PMF in criminal activities, such as smuggling goods and extortions, has been also reported (see 4.2.3. Criminal violence).

The PMF are generally considered State actors, although the State is unable to exert full control. Depending on the level of affiliation with the State in the particular case, other militias may be considered State or non-State actors.

See other topics concerning actors of persecution or serious harm:

- 2.1. The Iraqi Federal State actors
- *2.2. Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF)*
- 2.3. Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) authorities
- 2.4. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)
- 2.5. Tribes
- 2.6. Other actors

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu