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3.10.3. Christians

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: November 2024

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports: Targeting 2022, 4.1, 4.1.1, 4.1.2; Country Focus 2024, 1.2.1 1.3.1. Country Guidance should not be referred to as source of COI.

Following the US-led invasion in March 2003, the Christian population in Iraq declined from approximately 1 500 000 to less than 250 000. The Iraqi constitution guarantees freedom of religious belief and practices of Christians.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which Christians could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. Christian communities in central and southern governorates were victims of sectarian violence after 2003. ISIL also killed Christians in Ninewa in their attempt of religious cleansing. PMF also continued to target Christians through enforced disappearances, kidnappings, and physical violence.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that Christians could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should be also considered. PMF prevented the return of many displaced Christians as part of an attempt to induce demographic changes and secure illegal economic benefits. Illegal arrests and detention as well as further movements restrictions imposed by PMF have been reported. Christians have been socially pressured to withhold from celebrating religious feasts overlapping with Islamic holidays and Christian women have been harassed for not wearing *hijab*. Christian-owned liquor stores have been also attacked by PMF.

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

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

- **Home area:** In 2020, there were reports of violence, harassment and intimidation against Christians by the PMF particularly in the Ninewa governorate. Most recent information refers to land and properties grabbing from Christians in Ninewa. In the same area, Christians accused government officials of promoting a demographic change in favour of Shia Shabak. Christian liquor stores had been also attacked in Baghdad. Christians in the KRI have better living opportunities than in other parts of Iraq, however they still face some discrimination. Nevertheless, in the KRI, Christians were not reported to experience interference by the government in their religious practices. The presence of ISIL in the home area could also impact the risk. For the area(s) of presence and activities of ISIL, see 2.4. Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

- **Gender:** Christian women have been reported to be harassed for not following the Islamic practice of wearing the *hijab*.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this is highly likely to be for reasons of religion (Christianity).

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