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3.10.4. Sabean-Mandaeans

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

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports and query: Targeting 2019, 3.4.8; Sabean-Mandaean in Iraq 2020; Country Focus 2024, 1.2.1. Country Guidance should not be referred to as source of COI.

The Sabean-Mandaeans are one of the smallest ethno-religious minorities in Iraq, with an estimated number of less than 5 000 in 2019. Their area is in southern Iraq, including Basrah and the southern governorates of Dhi Qar and Missan, but small numbers also live in Baghdad and the KRI. The Iraqi constitution guarantees freedom of religious belief and practices of Sabean-Mandaeans. The Personal Status Law recognises a list of registered religious groups, including Sabean-Mandeans, allowing them to perform legal transactions and to appoint legal representatives.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which Sabean-Mandaeans could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. Sabean-Mandaeans are reported to face risks from extremist Islamist groups, without protection granted by the authorities. Community members have faced killings, abductions and torture.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that Sabean-Mandaeans could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should be also considered. Sabean-Mandaeans experience discrimination and negative stereotyping in all aspects of public life, being also accused of witchcraft and sorcery and being vulnerable to land seizures. They have been also extorted and pressured to conform to Islamic principles. Alcohol ban imposed in many parts of the country has also affected their businesses.

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

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

as:

- **Home area:** In 2017, it was indicated that, especially in Baghdad, members of the Sabean-Mandaean community were often associated with wealth and therefore susceptible to attacks.

  In 2017, it was reported that being Arabic speakers, Sabean-Mandaeans who fled to KRI faced a language barrier when interacting with the Kurdish majority, experiencing racism and sometimes discrimination or verbal abuse. However, compared to the rest of Iraq, the risk of persecution for Sabean-Mandaeans in the KRI would be lower.

- **Gender:** Outside the KRI, Sabean-Mandaean women had opted to wear the *hijab* after continuous harassment.

- **Occupation**: Sabean-Mandaeans were perceived as rich because they were associated with the jewellery trade. As a result, they have become a target for extortion and violence by extremist groups and criminal gangs.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for the applicant falling under this profile, this may be for reasons of religion and/or race, in particular in case of violence or discrimination because of their distinct ethnic and religious identity. In case of violence due to Sabean-Mandaeans being perceived as wealthy, there would be in general no nexus to a ground for persecution.

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