

2.4.4 Return of persons with perceived affiliation to ISIL

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Returnees from Al-Hol detention camp in northeastern Syria and other IDP camps in Iraq undergo security screening668 by the National Security Service,669 which includes questionnaires and biometric checks against ISIL-affiliate databases. Authorities may deny return or arrest individuals flagged during screening under Iraq's Anti-Terrorism Law, despite concerns about database inaccuracies and false positives.670 After screening, authorities temporarily transfer individuals to the Al Amal Center (formerly Jeddah 1 Rehabilitation Center), 671 near Mosul. UN agencies and NGOs provide reintegration support in the Center,672 including assistance with civil documentation, psychosocial care and vocational training.673

As of September 2024, Al Amal Center housed 2 223 people, mainly women and children. Since 2021, security forces arrested about 80 individuals charged with ISIL's affiliation, with reports of torture and enforced disappearance during interrogation. In October 2024, Amnesty International reported multiple cases of torture at Al Amal Center during interrogations conducted by Iraqi security forces, as well as reports of unfair trials under the Anti-Terrorism Law.674

Humanitarian needs at the Al Amal Center remained significant, especially in protection, legal aid, health, and education.675 A key issue is the lack of documentation676 which disproportionately affects female-headed households and their children.677 Documentation is essential for facilitating movement across checkpoints, for registration with authorities upon return678 and for accessing essential services.679 Persons with real or perceived ISIL links face difficulties obtaining civil documentation680 which increases risk of statelessness, particularly among youth. Fragile social cohesion and strained resources further heighten protection risks for both displaced and host communities681 (See section 2.7. on Children).

Despite the fast pace of returns from Syria's Al-Hol camp in Iraq,682 reintegration remains difficult683 due to damaged housing, limited services, legal barriers684 and lack of civil documentation.685 Observers expressed concerns that fast camp closures may increase the vulnerability of residents and hinder long-term reintegration.686 Returning IDPs perceived as affiliated with groups like ISIL are subject to harassment, retaliation,687 stigma and discrimination.688 In some cases, hate speech and revenge attacks in the host communities are reported.689

Return often depends on the *kafala* system, based on Iraq's Criminal Procedure Code (1971). Under this system, a guarantor (*kafeel*), usually a tribal leader, official, or male relative, attests to the individual's disassociation from ISIL and agrees to report any future suspicious activity, though without being legally liable.690 Although courts have ruled that security clearance is not a prerequisite for issuing civil documents, authorities commonly require clearance for parents, primarily fathers, before issuing legal identity documents, including for children.691

Many women whose husbands are missing or accused of ISIL affiliation have reportedly chosen or been encouraged to initiate divorce and pursue the tabriya procedure.692 Spouses of alleged ISIL members are generally required to undergo the so-called tabriya (denunciation)693 or ikhbar (notification) process694 in order to obtain a security clearance for themselves and their children. This process, which varies by court and jurisdiction, typically requires formally declaring the spouse's ISIL affiliation, renouncing the individual, and denying personal involvement.695 If the court accepts the declaration, judges issue certificates of innocence enabling women and their children to obtain security clearances and civil documentation. Authorities reportedly have eased strict application of this process.696 Judges often require additional evidence to establish paternity when fathers are suspected ISIL members, including DNA tests or court appearances, even if fathers are missing.697 When unable to prove paternity, women sometimes declare the child's paternal lineage as 'undetermined', a phenomenon surrounded by significant stigma.698

While intended to aid reintegration, *tabriya* can deepen stigma, especially for women and their children. In fact, in some cases, courts have used declarations as evidence of ISIL affiliation.699 The tabriya process remained 'inconsistent' and insufficient to obtain civil documentation for women and their children.700 (See section 2.7 on Children). Though not legally required, some tribes have linked tabriya to formal judicial processes through *ikhbar*.701 For more information on tribal aspects related to the treatment of persons with perceived affiliation to ISIL, see the EUAA COI Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law Report, April 2023.

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