

2.5 Palestinians in Iraq

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Iraq falls outside the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA); therefore, the protection of Palestinian refugees in Iraq is under the jurisdiction of the Iraqi Government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).[702]

The Palestinian population in Iraq has significantly declined since 2003.[703] As of 6 August 2025, a total of 13 926 Palestinian refugees are registered with the Permanent Committee for Refugee Affairs of the Ministry of Interior (PC-MoI).[704] Of these, 7 420 Palestinians were also registered with UNHCR as of 1 August 2025, including Palestinian refugees who arrived from Syria since 2011.[705] The majority of Palestinian refugees reside in Baghdad, particularly in the Al-Baladiyyat neighbourhood.[706] In the KRI, UNHCR registered 910 Palestinians in Erbil, 69 in Sulaymaniyah, and 9 in Dohuk as of June 2025.[707] Most Palestinians in the KRI hold the PC-MoI card, often expired due to a lack of PC-MoI missions to the KRI, and the UNHCR refugee certificate. Since 2021, Palestinian refugees who irregularly entered the KRI from Federal Iraq during the conflict with ISIL were given the possibility to regularise their stay through a Personal Identification Card (PIC),[708] provided that they meet the following conditions:

- being born in Iraq;
- holding a UNHCR certificate;
- holding a support letter from the Consulate General of the State of Palestine in Erbil;
- obtaining security and medical clearance.[709]

In 2008, the PC-MoI undertook the registration of Palestinian refugees[710] who were recognised as *prima facie* refugees and were issued national ID cards.[711] ID cards can be distinguished from those issued to Iraqi nationals,[712] making Palestinians easily identifiable as refugees. [713] However, Iraq does not have a comprehensive legal framework governing the status and protection of refugees in line with relevant international standards.[714] Issued by the Ministry of Interior, ID cards are valid for a period of five years for those arrived in 1948 and three years for those arrived in 1967 and subsequently.[715] Palestinians not registered as refugees with PC-MoI

have regularised their stay with the Residency Directorate based on, for example, a work or family visa.716

According to the 2006 Nationality Law, Palestinian refugees are excluded from naturalisation 'as a guarantee to their right to return to their homeland',717 and therefore do not qualify for Iraqi citizenship.718 In 2017,719 Decree No. 202 of 2001 was repealed.720 The decree had granted Palestinians the same rights as Iraqi citizens 'until the liberation of all Palestinian soil,'721 including access to public sector employment and membership in trade unions.722 Its repeal resulted in their legal status no longer being (near) equivalent to that of Iraqi citizens.723 This legal shift reportedly resulted in legal ambiguity and inconsistent practices, with some Palestinians losing employment and membership in trade unions. UNHCR documented that the revocation of Decree No. 202 also impacted the retirement rights of a Palestinian refugee, depriving his heirs of his retirement salary upon his death.724

Art. No. 23 of the Constitution725 prohibits non-Iraqis from owning property and this restriction equally applies to Palestinians.726 A new directive that entered into force in 2024 prohibited Palestinian refugees from owning taxis, which had been a primary source of income for many. 727 A new directive issued by the Ministry of Interior grants residency to foreigners who purchase residential property, subject to specific conditions; however, it remains unclear whether these regulations apply to Palestinians residing in Iraq or what documentation will be required.728

Following the ousting of Saddam Hussein, Palestinians in Iraq faced what has been described as an 'extensive backlash' from society, state institutions, and armed militias. This hostility was linked to perceptions among many Iraqis that the Baath regime had granted Palestinians more favourable conditions, including better access to rights, higher housing standards, and other benefits,729 and to suspicions of their support for ISIL730 or, previously, Al-Qaeda. 731 However, following ISIL's defeat, and relative improvements in the security situation in most parts of Iraq, UNHCR did not report major incidents targeting Palestinians since 2019. Palestinians generally face the same challenges as the broader population, including issues related to security, human rights, and weak rule of law.732

Conditions for Palestinians are characterised by poverty,733 unemployment,734 and overcrowded housing.735 Holders of PC-MoI-issued ID cards generally have access to public schools, health facilities, Public Distribution System (PDS) for food rations, and they are permitted to rent property.736 As in the rest of the population, the availability and quality of such services may vary by area and may be inconsistent, poor, or entirely lacking.737 In the KRI, Palestinian refugees are reportedly allowed to work in the private sector and renew humanitarian residency permits.738

Freedom of movement within Federal Iraq can be restricted for Palestinians with expired ID cards. ID cards are not always recognised or respected at security checkpoints, especially outside Baghdad, further limiting their freedom of movement. UNHCR observed that many Palestinian refugees fear harassment and abuse when crossing checkpoints operated by the PMF.739

To leave Iraq, Palestinians who arrived in 1948 must obtain a travel document from the Residence Affairs Directorate of the Ministry of Interior, while others must use a Palestinian passport issued by the Embassy of Palestine in Baghdad. Travel documents from the Residence Affairs Directorate are valid for one year and permit re-entry into Iraq. 740 Palestinians risk losing their refugee status if they remain outside Iraq for more than one month;741 in such a case, upon return, they must obtain an entry visa and re-apply for asylum with the PC-MoI.742 Many Palestinians in Iraq remain stateless743 and are reportedly subjected to aid cuts and increasing limitations inscribed in Iraqi law.744

No additional information was found regarding the treatment of Palestinians by state and non-state actors within the time constraints of this report.

- 702

  Boston University, The Campaign to end statelessness in Iraq - حملة إنهاء حالات انعدام الجنسية في العراق , March 2022,

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  New Arab (The), Palestinian refugees in Iraq deprived of right to 'own taxis', 15 November 2024, url

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  Ministry of Interior’s Permanent Committee of Refugee Affairs

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  UNHCR further noted that the increase in registrations with UNHCR (approximately 6 700 in January 2024) is linked to new arrivals from Syria and Lebanon as a result of the challenging security conditions in these countries as well as the registration of newborns and individuals previously registered only with PC-MoI, UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025

- 706

  MEMO, Palestinians of Iraq suffer from deteriorating conditions, 3 January 2023, url; UNHCR, email

- 707

  UNHCR added that the increase since January 2024 is related to the same reasons as detailed under Federal

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  Formerly known as the Humanitarian Residency Permit (HRP), UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025

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UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025

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  UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025; Boston University, The Campaign to end statelessness

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  UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025

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  Boston University, The Campaign to end statelessness in Iraq - حملة إنهاء حالات انعدام الجنسية في العراق , March 2022,

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  UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025

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  UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025

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  UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025; USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights

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  UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025;

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  Art. 6 (2) reads as follows: ‘Iraqi nationality shall not be granted to Palestinians as a guarantee to

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  UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025

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  Iraq: Law on the Residence of Foreigners (2017), url

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  Iraq, Resolution by the Revolutionary Command Council on the Treatment of Palestinians Permanently Residing in Iraq as Iraqis (2001), 24 September 2001, url; New Arab (The), Palestinian refugees in Iraq deprived of right to 'own taxis', 15 November 2024, url

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Iraq, Resolution by the Revolutionary Command Council on the Treatment of Palestinians Permanently Residing in Iraq as Iraqis (2001), 24 September 2001, url; New Arab (The), Palestinian refugees in Iraq deprived of right to 'own taxis', 15 November 2024, url

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  UNHCR, email to EUAA, 6 August 2025

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  UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025

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  UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025

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  Article 23 (3 A) reads as follows: ‘Every Iraqi shall have the right to own property anywhere in Iraq. No others

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  UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025

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  New Arab (The), Palestinian refugees in Iraq deprived of right to 'own taxis', 15 November 2024, url

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  UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025

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  Boston University, The Campaign to end statelessness in Iraq حملة إنهاء حالات انعدام الجنسية في العراق , March 2022,

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  NPR, Palestinians who settled in Iraq have remained stateless for generations, 3 March 2024, url; UNHCR, email to EUAA, 6 August 2025

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  UNHCR, email to EUAA, 6 August 2025

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  UNHCR, email to EUAA, 6 August 2025

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Al Jazeera, Forgotten generations: Palestinians in Iraq mourn their homeland, via YouTube, Al Jazeera English channel, 13 January 2024, url

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  UNHCR, email to EUAA, 6 August 2025

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  UNHCR, email to EUAA, 6 August 2025

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  UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025; USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights

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  UNHCR, email communication to EUAA, 6 August 2025

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  USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iraq, 23 April 2024, url, p. 41

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  UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 6 August 2025

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  UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 6 August 2025

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  UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 6 August 2025; New Arab (The), Palestinian refugees in Iraq deprived of right to 'own taxis', 15 November 2024, url

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  UNHCR, email communication with EUAA, 6 August 2025

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  NPR, Palestinians who settled in Iraq have remained stateless for generations, 3 March 2024, url; Al Jazeera, Forgotten generations: Palestinians in Iraq mourn their homeland, via YouTube, Al Jazeera English channel, 13 January 2024, url

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  New Arab (The), Neglected Palestinian refugees in Iraq ask UN for help, 19 July 2022, url

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