

2.7.1 Child recruitment by armed groups

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Minimum age of recruitment in Iraq is 18 years old; there is no military conscription. The same minimum age applies to armed groups operating in the country under the government's umbrella.854 In March 2023, the Iraqi authorities and the UN signed an agreement to prevent the recruitment of children by the PMF.855 Up to September 2024, no confirmed violations of the agreement by the PMF were recorded.856 In September 2024, the UN reported a 'significant increase' in cases of child recruitment by armed actors – particularly the People's Defence Forces of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (HPG/PKK) and ISIL – including for combat roles.857 According to the same report, many cases go unreported or cannot be verified.858 Recruitment of seven children for combat roles was verified, including six by HPG/PKK and one by ISIL. Eight children were reported to be abducted by armed groups, including for the purpose of recruitment, namely six by HPG/PKK and two by ISIL.859 In the June 2025 report, CRC welcomed 'successful implementation' of the agreement to prevent the recruitment and use of children by the PMF but it also stated that child recruitment has not been criminalised.860 Out-of-school children were more at risk of exploitation, including recruitment by armed groups.861

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  NRC, Legal Guide to Children's Rights in Iraq, [November 2024], url, p. 38

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  UN, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, The Government of Iraq, supported by the United Nations, strengthens its commitment to prevent the recruitment and use of children by armed forces, 30 March 2023, url

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  Seed Foundation, et al., Children's right to identity in Iraq, 99th pre-session (September 2024), Combined Fifth and Sixth Periodic Report, September 2024, url, p. 2

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  UN Press, Public Statement by Chair of Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, 9 September 2024, url

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UN Press, Public Statement by Chair of Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, 9 September 2024, url

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  UNSG, Children and armed conflict, Report of the Secretary-General, 17 June 2025, url, paras. 84, 88

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  CRC, Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Iraq, 5 June 2025, url, para. 51

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  The Borgen Project, Little-Known Facts About Child Poverty In Iraq, 21 April 2025, url

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