

2.7.2 Children with perceived affiliation to ISIL

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In 2024, the Iraqi authorities continued to facilitate voluntary returns of families from Syria, including of those with perceived affiliation to ISIL.862 The majority of returnees were female-headed households with children.863 In 2024, 1 529 Iraqi children were repatriated to Iraq from northeastern Syria.864 Families of ISIL fighters, including children, struggled when attempting to reintegrate into society due to financial difficulties and hostility of the society. Often lacking identity documents, they were unable to receive official support from the state.865

Children of alleged ISIL members, whose parents' marriage was not officially recognised, lack birth certificates and cannot obtain additional legal documents,866 placing them at risk of statelessness.867 Children born of unofficial marriages and with no birth certificates, including children of alleged ISIL members, are unable to inherit property.868 For more information on the process of the proof of lineage, see the EUAA Country Focus, May 2024, section 1.1.3 Individuals with (perceived) affiliation to ISIL. According to a September 2024 article by Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ), teenage boys were reportedly at particular risk of being killed if they attempted to return. The same source indicated that such a return was reportedly possible only after the payment of a fee and with the approval of a local clan leader.869

According to UNICEF 2024 Country report's figures, some 2 400 children were in detention in 2024.870 In a September 2024 report, the UN Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict expressed concern regarding the continued detention of children for their actual or perceived association with ISIL**,** despite a reported decrease in the number of children held in detention. Detained children faced difficulties when accessing education and social and legal services.871 Children may also be detained due to their relatives' perceived links to armed actors, and some have reportedly been subjected to ill-treatment.872 In its June 2025 report, the CRC raised concern about 'the detention of foreign children related mostly on charges related terrorism and/or affiliation with Da'esh'.873 See also Return of persons with perceived affiliation to ISIL.

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  CRC, Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Iraq*, 18 July 2025, url, para. 51

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