

2.7.6 Children in street situations

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Even though illegal in Iraq,912 cases of abandonment of children were reported as ‘alarmingly high’913 and increasing.914 Abandoned children are particularly exposed to the risk of abuse and exploitation, including for prostitution networks.915 There were an estimated five million 916 orphans in Iraq (or less than one million, according to the Iraqi authorities917), many of them without any civil documentation.918 Availability of shelters remained limited.919

Media sources reported on an increase in child begging in early 2025.920 In a June 2025 report, OHCHR expressed concerns regarding ‘the large number of children in street situation’ in Iraq. 921 In July 2024, the governor’s office in Erbil, within the KRI, announced the launch of a campaign aimed at removing children from the streets. According to Save the Children, 1 247 children were working in the streets across the KRI as of June 2024.922 Children who were forced to beg in the streets faced abuse by either organised criminal gangs or their family members and were exposed to the risk of being abducted and trafficked. In the period of 2023-2024, 160 children were documented as victims of trafficking in human beings (THB).923 Authorities have reportedly targeted suspected leaders of begging rings for arrests.924 Exploitation of children in Iraq includes begging alongside forced labour.925

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