



## 2.10 Persons involved in and affected by blood/land feuds in the context of tribal conflict

### 2.10 Persons involved in and affected by blood/land feuds in the context of tribal conflict

For more information on Blood feuds (thar), see the EUAA COI report [Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law Report, April 2023](#).

Since 2003, the weakening of the state authority has led to a resurgence of tribal influence in law enforcement<sup>1020</sup> and state judiciary.<sup>1021</sup> Tribalism remained deeply rooted in Iraq,<sup>1022</sup> including in the KRI, where tribal structures often fill gaps left by the formal judicial system.<sup>1023</sup> Haley Bobseine described customary tribal law as ‘a defining characteristic of modern Iraqi society’, operating in parallel with state law due to a considerable overlap between state and tribal systems.<sup>1024</sup>

Tribal customs and laws may vary across the tribes, as each has its own internal rules. However, broad similarities can be found in their foundational principles.<sup>1025</sup> A defining element of the tribal system is the strong sense of group identity, which often subordinates individual interests. Individuals are expected to conform for group survival, but also for their own protection, which is granted in return for their loyalty.<sup>1026</sup> As historian Mélisande Genat notes in her thesis, criminal liability in sharia is individual, while in tribal custom it is shared.<sup>1027</sup>

Under tribal custom, male members of the extended family (*khamsa*) are duty-bound to avenge the harm or death of one of their own, either by retaliating against a member of the perpetrator’s *khamsa* or, more commonly, by agreeing to financial compensation (*fasl* or *diya*) paid to the victim’s family.<sup>1028</sup> Tribal justice mechanisms, such as *solh al-ashai’iri* (‘tribal settlements’) held in *diwan al-Arab* (‘guesthouses’), are widely used particularly in central and southern governorates, where formal courts are seen as slow, corrupt, or inaccessible.<sup>1029</sup> Such mechanisms are generally used for property, accidents, and homicides disputes.<sup>1030</sup> Corruption in the police is also a factor pushing citizens to resolve grievances through tribal channels.<sup>1031</sup>

*Fasl* is a tribal custom that includes negotiations to settle a dispute,<sup>1032</sup> involving financial or moral compensation (*diya*).<sup>1033</sup> It is especially relied upon in cases where the state is absent or ineffective,<sup>1034</sup> including honour killings.<sup>1035</sup> In a 2025 academic study, Reem Zeyad Arif

examined the role of Iraqi tribes in the country. The research was based on interviews with 30 participants, including tribal leaders, affiliated members, and subject-matter experts.[1036](#) Some interviewees expressed concerns that *fasl*, particularly in domestic violence cases, may allow perpetrators to evade accountability and contribute to rising rates of domestic crime[1037](#) (See [section 2.6 on Women and girls](#)). Tribal conflicts may also be resolved through *fasliyah* – the practice of exchanging or trading women as compensation and as part of settlement of a dispute among tribes[1038](#) – despite its prohibition under State law.[1039](#) *Fasliyah* places women and girls at heightened risk of trafficking within the country.[1040](#)

Blood feuds (*thar*) occur when disputes between tribes remain unresolved.[1041](#) Although *thar* is a tribal practice, is not considered as part of ‘tribal codes’ nor a tribal conflict resolution mechanism. As Mélisande Genat[1042](#) observed, ‘vendetta cycles happen precisely because no agreement could be found’.[1043](#) Acts of revenge are only permitted under specific conditions and must follow several prescribed steps, including repeated efforts to reach a settlement (*fasl*) before blood is shed.[1044](#)

Such feuds are not an isolated phenomenon in Iraq.[1045](#) Tribal violence is often rooted in honour-based grievances[1046](#) and retaliation.[1047](#) Other triggering factors include longstanding land disputes,[1048](#) border crossings control,[1049](#) theft,[1050](#) unemployment, poverty and drug use.[1051](#) Competition over access to water resources have exacerbated tensions[1052](#) – especially in southern Iraq, where climate-related issues have been at the front line of the tribal conflict in the area, particularly during years of drought.[1053](#) Disputes may take months or years to resolve and often require significant intervention from local authorities to restore order.[1054](#)

The militarisation of tribal groups has further challenged state authority.[1055](#) Many tribes have access to a large arsenal,[1056](#) including weapons left over from Saddam Hussein regime and from paramilitary groups.[1057](#) Tribal weaponry is not limited to light firearms, but includes rockets, machine guns, armoured vehicles and other heavy weapons.[1058](#) Despite state efforts to control arms through disarmament programmes,[1059](#) enforcement has been hindered by collusion between security forces and tribal or political actors.[1060](#) In a May 2025 interview with The New Region, a news outlet covering Iraq and the Middle East, the Sheikh Nafi' al-Shami of the al-Bu Shama tribe stated that weapons are part of tribal identity and cannot be fully confiscated, noting that while the law allows only one licensed weapon per citizen, in reality tribes hold ‘unlimited arsenals.’[1061](#)

An Iraqi parliamentary committee has been reviewing legislation aimed at regulating the practice of blood money (compensation via tribal mediation). Concerns include excessive compensation demands, reportedly up to 1 billion IQD [approximately EUR 656 000], and the involvement of self-proclaimed ‘Facebook sheikhs’ who reportedly exploit the system for profit. Some settlements have reportedly involved coercive practices such as forced marriage or deterring medical assistance for fear of retaliation. Reform efforts have faced resistance and legal changes are constrained by Article 45 of the Iraqi Constitution, which protects tribal customs unless they conflict with human rights.[1062](#) Based on the opinion of most Iraqi tribesmen interviewed by Mélisande Genat, distortion of tribal justice is the so-called ‘*fasl* inflation’, particularly in southern Iraq where, *diyas* for homicides and injuries are viewed as

‘wildly unreasonably’.[1063](#)

During the reference period, a ‘rising tide of tribal violence’ was reported, especially in southern governorates,[1064](#) including Baghdad,[1065](#) posing a security concern for the government.[1066](#) In the KRI, due to proliferation of arms, conflicts between families frequently turn violent, resulting in casualties.[1067](#) In Basrah, the police play a marginal role in managing tribal conflicts.[1068](#) The overlapping interests of tribal leaders, public officials, and political networks has also had negative implications for public security, [1069](#) particularly due to tribal loyalties within the security apparatus.[1070](#) Despite this, some areas have seen a decline in tribal disputes. In May 2025, The New Region reported a ‘sharp drop’ in such incidents in Thi-Qar governorate, attributed to greater state presence and law enforcement. Sheikh Nafi' al-Shami told The New Region that this drop was due to growing awareness among tribes that ‘bloodshed and property attacks solve nothing’, along with the establishment of a government committee to address conflicts.[1071](#)

In August 2024, a violent tribal conflict erupted in Nasiriyah (Thi-Qar governorate) resulting in four individuals being injured and a tribal sheikh’s home being burned down. Security forces reportedly faced restrictions accessing the scene.[1072](#) In the same month, a person was killed in Najaf governorate as a result of a suspect tribal conflict. A total of 70 people were arrested with numerous weapons and ammunition confiscated.[1073](#) In April 2025, a middle school student was killed in Basrah in a tribal vengeance clash.[1074](#) In June 2025, in Dohuk, as a result of a family feud, two children of eight and ten years old with no connection to the dispute have been killed .[1075](#) In July 2025, clashes between the Harki and Goran tribes in western Erbil (KRI) over land disputes tied to the KRG oil pipeline highlighted how tribal loyalties often override formal governance structures,[1076](#) and reflect tribal dynamics within KDP rule.[1077](#) In August 2024, the Sudani administration introduced a ‘tribal covenant’ aimed at reducing tribal clashes.[1078](#)

For information on honour killings, See also [section 2.9 Individuals perceived as transgressing moral and Islamic norms](#) and [section 2.6 Women and girls](#)).

- [1020](#)

Arif, R. Z., Tribes and Democracy in Iraq—Are Iraqi Tribes a Steppingstone on the Path to Democracy?, Open

- [1021](#)

Kurdistan24, Tribal Justice and State Fragility: The Enduring Influence of Clans in Southern Iraq, 29 January

- [1022](#)

Shafaq News, Al-Sudani urges Iraqi tribes to end disputes, Support business stability, 10 February 2025, [url](#)

- [1023](#)

Nishtiman O. M., Adnan A. F., The Impact of Tribal Mediation on The Judicial System, Specifically in the Context

- [1024](#)

Bobseine H., Senior Iraq researcher and analyst specializing on tribal affairs, Interview, 28-29 October 2024 and email communication to EUAA, 13 July 2025

- [1025](#)

Bobseine H., Senior Iraq researcher and analyst specializing on tribal affairs, Interview, 28-29 October 2024 and email communication to EUAA, 13 July 2025

- [1026](#)

Bobseine H., Senior Iraq researcher and analyst specializing on tribal affairs, Interview, 28-29 October 2024 and email communication to EUAA, 13 July 2025

- [1027](#)

Genat M., State Law and Tribal Justice in Iraq, March 2023, [url](#), p. 161

- [1028](#)

UNHCR, Tribal Conflict Resolution in Iraq, 15 January 2018, [url](#), p. 3; Arif, R. Z., Tribes and Democracy in Iraq—Are Iraqi Tribes a Steppingstone on the Path to Democracy?, Open Journal of Political Science, 16 January 2025, 15(1), [url](#), p. 256

- [1029](#)

Arif, R. Z., Tribes and Democracy in Iraq—Are Iraqi Tribes a Steppingstone on the Path to Democracy?, 16

- [1030](#)

Amwaj, 'Facebook sheikhs' in focus as Iraqi lawmakers probe 'blood money', 29 August 2024, [url](#)

- [1031](#)

Waradana, Iraq: Police Corruption Fuels Tribal Conflicts, 10 October 2024, [url](#)

- [1032](#)

Salah Dagher Al-Okabi, [لأصناف الفاسل](#) [the meaning of tribal fasl] [Online video], 5 May 2022, [url](#)

- [1033](#)

Arif, R. Z., Tribes and Democracy in Iraq—Are Iraqi Tribes a Steppingstone on the Path to Democracy?, 16 January 2025, [url](#), p. 254

- [1034](#)

Arif, R. Z., Tribes and Democracy in Iraq—Are Iraqi Tribes a Steppingstone on the Path to Democracy?, 16 January 2025, [url](#), p. 256

- [1035](#)

Bobseine H., Senior Iraq researcher and analyst specializing on tribal affairs, Interview, 28-29 October 2024 and email communication to EUAA, 13 July 2025

- [1036](#)

Arif, R. Z., Tribes and Democracy in Iraq—Are Iraqi Tribes a Steppingstone on the Path to Democracy?, 16

- [1037](#)

Arif, R., Tribes and Democracy in Iraq—Are Iraqi Tribes a Steppingstone on the Path to Democracy?, January 2025, [url](#), p. 254

- [1038](#)

UNHCR, Tribal Conflict Resolution in Iraq, January 15, 2018, [url](#), p. 2; HRW, Interview with EUAA, 13 March 2023; OWFI, Interview with EUAA, 16 March 2023; Ceasefire for Civilian Rights, Correspondence with EUAA, 16 March 2023, originally cited in EUAA, COI Report, Iraq: Arab tribes and customary law, April 2023, [url](#); Tawfiq Marwan, M., Forced Marriages In Tribal Iraq: A Case Study From Kirkuk, May 2019, [url](#), p. 6-7, 18-19

- [1039](#)

UNHCR, Tribal Conflict Resolution in Iraq, January 15, 2018, [url](#), p. 2

- [1040](#)

USDOS, Annual report on trafficking in persons (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#)

- [1041](#)

UNHCR, Tribal Conflict Resolution in Iraq, 15 January 2018, [url](#), p. 3

- [1042](#)

Melisande Genat holds a PHD in History at Stanford University with extensive experience researching tribal justice and conflict resolution mechanisms in Iraq.

- [1043](#)

Genat, M., video interview with EUAA, 4 October 2022, originally cited in EUAA, COI

- [1044](#)

Genat M., State Law and Tribal Justice in Iraq, March 2023, [url](#) , p. 372

- [1045](#)

Genat M., State Law and Tribal Justice in Iraq, March 2023, [url](#), p. 377

- [1046](#)

Genat M., State Law and Tribal Justice in Iraq, March 2023, [url](#) , p. 388; +964, Clashes erupt between tribes in Wasit, security forces arrest several in Sheikh Saad, 7 October 2024, [url](#)

- [1047](#)

+964, Clashes erupt between tribes in Wasit, security forces arrest several in Sheikh Saad, 7 October 2024, [url](#)

- [1048](#)

+964, Clashes erupt between tribes in Wasit, security forces arrest several in Sheikh Saad, 7 October 2024,

- [1049](#)

Rudaw, Five killed in Diwaniyah tribal dispute clash a day after a similar conflict in Basra, 2 April 2025, [url](#)

- [1050](#)

Genat M., State Law and Tribal Justice in Iraq, March 2023, [url](#) , p. 388

- [1051](#)

New Region (The), After years of tribal conflicts, Dhi Qar sees decline in violence, 27 May 2025, [url](#)

- [1052](#)

Rudaw, Five killed in Diwaniyah tribal dispute clash a day after a similar conflict in Basra, 2 April 2025. [url](#); New Region (The), After years of tribal conflicts, Dhi Qar sees decline in violence, 27 May 2025, [url](#)

- [1053](#)

Community Change, Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier: Security and Communal Implications for Iraq, 9

- [1054](#)

+964, Clashes erupt between tribes in Wasit, security forces arrest several in Sheikh Saad, 7 October 2024, [url](#)

- [1055](#)

Kurdistan24, Tribal Justice and State Fragility: The Enduring Influence of Clans in Southern Iraq, 29 January

- [1056](#)

New Region (The), After years of tribal conflicts, Dhi Qar sees decline in violence, 27 May 2025, [url](#)

- [1057](#)

Rudaw, Five killed in Diwaniyah tribal dispute clash a day after a similar conflict in Basra, 2 April 2025,

- [1058](#)

Waradana, Iraq: Police Corruption Fuels Tribal Conflicts, 10 October 2024, [url](#)

- [1059](#)

New Region (The), After years of tribal conflicts, Dhi Qar sees decline in violence, 27 May 2025, [url](#)

- [1060](#)

Genat M., State Law and Tribal Justice in Iraq, State Law and Tribal Justice in Iraq, March 2023, [url](#), p. 380

- [1061](#)

New Region (The), After years of tribal conflicts, Dhi Qar sees decline in violence, 27 May 2025, [url](#)

- [1062](#)

Amwaj, 'Facebook sheikhs' in focus as Iraqi lawmakers probe 'blood money', 29 August 2024, [url](#)

- [1063](#)

Genat M., State Law and Tribal Justice in Iraq, March 2023, [url](#), p. 375

- [1064](#)

Rudaw, Middle school student tragically killed in tribal revenge attack in southern Iraq, 28 April 2025, [url](#);

- [1065](#)

Baghdad Today, [داغ ب ي ف ة يرئ اشع ة كذ ذف ني وهو ويدي ف ع ط ق م ب ره ظ مه تم ي لع ض ب ق ل ل](#) [Arrest of suspect who appeared in a video carrying out a tribal attack in Baghdad], 28 May

2025, [url](#); Al-Sumaria, Tribal conflict in Baghdad causes fire in homes, 7 May 2025, [url](#); Baghdad Today, Tribal clash in Abu Ghraib: one civilian killed and four injured, 15 April 2025, [url](#); Shafaq News, Tribal clash in Baghdad: one cow killed and more injured, 15 February 2025, [url](#); Shafaq News, Two killed and arrests in Baghdad due to tribal disputes, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

- [1066](#)

Rudaw, Five killed in Diwaniyah tribal dispute clash a day after a similar conflict in Basra, 2 April 2025, [url](#)

- [1067](#)

Rudaw, Two sisters killed in Duhok family feud, 12 June 2025, [url](#)

- [1068](#)

New Region (The), After years of tribal conflicts, Dhi Qar sees decline in violence, 27 May 2025, [url](#)

- [1069](#)

Genat M., State Law and Tribal Justice in Iraq, March 2023, [url](#), pp. 380, 404

- [1070](#)

New Region (The), After years of tribal conflicts, Dhi Qar sees decline in violence, 27 May 2025, [url](#)

- [1071](#)

New Region (The), After years of tribal conflicts, Dhi Qar sees decline in violence, 27 May 2025, [url](#)

- [1072](#)

Shafaq News, Tribal clash north of Nasiriyah: four injured, sheikh's home burned, 9 August 2024, [url](#)

- [1073](#)

Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2024, [url](#), p. 5

- [1074](#)

Rudaw, Middle school student tragically killed in tribal revenge attack in southern Iraq, 28 April 2025, [url](#)

- [1075](#)

Rudaw, Two sisters killed in Duhok family feud, 12 June 2025, [url](#)

- [1076](#)

Kurdistan Watch, published on X, 4 July 2025, [url](#) ; Rudaw, Tribal loyalists clash with Kurdish security forces over land dispute in Erbil, 8 July 2025, [url](#)

- [1077](#)

Amwaj, Clashes in Iraqi Kurdistan show power of tribes acting outside state control, 17 July 2025, [url](#);

- [1078](#)

Amwaj, Shiite pilgrimage in Iraq marred by tribal violence, army-PMU clash, 23 August 2024, [url](#)