



# THE CONDEMNED

WOMEN AND CHILDREN ISOLATED, TRAPPED AND  
EXPLOITED IN IRAQ

AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL



**Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 7 million people who campaign for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.**

**Our vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.**

**We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion and are funded mainly by our membership and public donations.**

© Amnesty International 2018

Except where otherwise noted, content in this document is licensed under a Creative Commons (attribution, non-commercial, no derivatives, international 4.0) licence.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode>

For more information please visit the permissions page on our website: [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

Where material is attributed to a copyright owner other than Amnesty International this material is not subject to the Creative Commons licence.

First published in 2018

by Amnesty International Ltd

Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street

London WC1X 0DW, UK

Index: MDE 14/8196/2018

Original language: English

[amnesty.org](http://amnesty.org)



*Cover photo: "Zahra", 33 years old, sits inside her tent in Salamiya camp for internally displaced people, where she and her family have lived for seven months. Originally from a village south of Mosul, the family moved to Mosul three years after "Zahra's" husband joined IS, working with the group as a cook. He was killed by an airstrike in June 2017. © Amnesty International*

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



# CONTENTS

<b>1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 THE BATTLE AGAINST IS IN IRAQ	10
3.2 TRAUMA AND SUFFERING AS A RESULT OF THE CONFLICT	12
<b>4. IMPACT OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE</b>	<b>16</b>
4.1 SCALE AND PATTERNS OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE	16
4.2 TORTURE, INHUMAN CONDITIONS AND EXECUTIONS	18
4.3 IMPACT OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE ON FAMILIES LEFT BEHIND	18
<b>5. VIOLATIONS, ABUSES AND RISKS IN IDP CAMPS</b>	<b>20</b>
5.1 ACCESS TO FOOD, WATER AND HEALTH CARE	20
5.2 CIVIL DOCUMENTATION	22
5.3 FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT	24
5.4 HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION	26
5.5 RAPE AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION	27
<b>6. LACK OF OPTIONS, FUTURE RISKS</b>	<b>34</b>
6.1 BLOCKS TO RETURN	34
6.2 MISTREATMENT IN PLACES OF ORIGIN	36
6.3 'BOOMERANG' RETURNS TO THE CAMPS	37
6.4 A BLEAK FUTURE	37
<b>7. APPLICATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW</b>	<b>39</b>
7.1 ARBITRARY DETENTION, EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTION, ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES AND TORTURE	40
7.2 RIGHTS TO FOOD, WATER AND HEALTH CARE AND TO EDUCATION	41
7.3 RIGHT TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A PERSON BEFORE THE LAW	42
7.4 FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT	43

7.5 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE INCLUDING RAPE AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION	44
<b>8. CONCLUSION</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>9. RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>47</b>

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**“I feel as if I just woke up from a bad dream, but what’s around me now is even worse. We are women and children. Just protect our rights – our basic rights.”**

“Maha”, member of female-headed household at Hamam al-Alil camp

In the aftermath of three years of armed conflict involving the armed group calling itself the Islamic State (IS), thousands of Iraqi women and children with perceived ties to IS have been condemned for crimes they did not commit. They have been stigmatized and punished for factors outside their control – such as being related, however distantly, to men who were somehow involved with IS, or for fleeing from areas believed to be IS strongholds.

Amnesty International’s research has revealed that, in camps for displaced persons across Iraq, these women and children are denied food, water and health care; blocked from obtaining the civil documents they need to work and move freely; subjected to sexual harassment, rape and sexual exploitation; and prevented from returning home. This treatment has left these families desperate, isolated and with a deep sense of injustice.

Amnesty International concludes that women and children with perceived ties to IS have been subjected to serious human rights violations and collective punishment.

Amnesty International conducted research on the situation of Iraqi women and children with perceived IS ties from October 2017 to March 2018. It focused on human rights violations faced by female-headed families with perceived IS ties rather than those faced by female-headed households in general, because, in the course of its research, it found that families with such ties faced particular or more acute risks in several areas. Between 7 to 16 December 2017 and 15 to 29 January 2018, three Amnesty International researchers visited eight camps for internally displaced people (IDPs) in Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates and interviewed a total of 92 women who were members of female-headed families. Amnesty International researchers also interviewed 11 members of camp administrations, 24 staff members of international NGOs, six staff members of national NGOs and nine current or former UN officials.

On 3 April 2018, Amnesty International communicated its key findings in a memorandum addressed to Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi. No substantive response had been received as of 13 April 2018, when this report was finalized.

## IMPACT OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

As families fled IS-held territory in Mosul and its surrounding areas, thousands of men and boys were separated from their families and arbitrarily arrested. While some IS fighters and commanders were captured in these arrests, many others were arrested for having non-combat roles with IS, such as being cooks or drivers, for simply having names that were similar to men listed in computer databases, for fleeing from certain areas or neighbourhoods or for being related to IS fighters. Many were extrajudicially executed. Those who survived have been detained in a vast network of official and underground detention centres and forced

to endure torture and horrific conditions. Almost all of these men and boys have been forcibly disappeared – cut off from the outside world and their families, who are denied any information about their fate. This wave of “disappearances”, in combination with the fact that thousands of men were killed or went missing during the conflict, means that thousands of female-headed families with a perceived affiliation to IS are now struggling for survival in Iraq.

## **VIOLATIONS, ABUSES AND RISKS IN IDP CAMPS**

Women and children living in IDP camps are subjected to a series of violations, abuses and risks as a result of their perceived IS ties. These violations are carried out by armed actors operating in the camps, camp authorities and others. Many are denied access to food, water and health care. They are routinely blocked from obtaining new or replacement identity cards and other civil documents, which often means that the women cannot move freely, work or collect family pensions, and that their children cannot attend school. They suffer severe restrictions on their freedom of movement, whether due to the fact that they do not have proper documentation or that camp authorities have blocked them from leaving the camp, placing them in de facto detention.

Due to their marginalization and vulnerability, women with perceived IS ties have endured sexual harassment. Many of them have also been subjected to sexual violence including rape and sexual exploitation. Amnesty International researchers established that sexual exploitation was occurring at every camp visited during the research for this report. The practice was confirmed and described by 26 international NGO workers, national NGO workers and current and former UN officials and 19 members of female-headed households, nine of whom told Amnesty International they had personally been subjected to coercion or pressure to enter into exploitative sexual relationships with men. According to these sources, sexual exploitation is primarily carried out by armed actors present in the camps. These armed actors take advantage of their positions of authority, coercing and pressuring the women to enter sexual relationships in exchange for desperately needed cash, humanitarian aid or protection from other armed actors or men in the camps.

“Dana”, a 20-year-old woman, survived several rape attempts and was repeatedly pressured to enter a sexual relationship with a member of the security forces in her camp. She told Amnesty International: “Because they consider me the same as an IS fighter, they will rape me and return me back. They want to show everyone what they can do to me – to take away my honour... I can’t feel comfortable in my tent. I just want a door to lock and walls around me... each night I say to myself, ‘Tonight is the night I’m going to die.’”

## **LACK OF OPTIONS, FUTURE RISKS**

Many women and children with perceived ties to IS are trapped in the camps, unable to return home as a result of threats or orders. Those responsible include tribal and local authorities, Iraqi forces including the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), government-aligned militias and community members. Families who have managed to go home have been subjected to attacks, evictions, arrests and other abuses. This has led to a spate of “boomerang returns” to the camps. Some women told Amnesty International that their lack of options for the future had led them to consider suicide.

Amnesty International has documented in detail the appalling violations carried out by IS in Iraq, including but not limited to forcibly displacing thousands of civilians into zones of active hostilities to shield their own fighters, deliberately killing civilians attempting to flee the fighting, recruiting and deploying child soldiers and subjecting thousands of Yezidi women to rape, assault and enslavement. The perpetrators of these crimes must be brought to justice in fair trials and their victims must receive full reparation. Yet subjecting women and children who did not commit these crimes to collective punishment is not the answer. Condemning these families to yet another round of violations and abuse is grossly unjust, undermines the prospect for reconciliation and could sow the seeds for yet another cycle of violations and crimes in Iraq. According to “Yasmine”, a member of a female-headed family living in Nimrud camp: “The government needs to turn a new page, or they will be no better than IS.”

Amnesty International calls on the Iraqi authorities to end the collective punishment of families with perceived ties to IS. As an urgent matter, the authorities must end the systematic and widespread practice of forcibly disappearing men and boys with perceived ties to IS, which has led to the emergence of thousands of female-headed families in Iraq. They must ensure that families with perceived ties to IS are provided with equal access to humanitarian aid, health care and civil documents. The authorities must also fulfil their obligations to allow these families to move freely inside and outside of the camps – and to return home without fear of intimidation, arrest or attacks. As a matter of priority, the Iraqi authorities must take action to

end sexual violence, including rape and sexual exploitation, against women with perceived IS ties. As first steps, they should hold all perpetrators accountable and prevent armed actors from entering IDP camps.

“Victory” over IS in Iraq cannot be understood in only military terms. To end the cycles of mistreatment, marginalization and resulting communal violence and abuses, the Iraqi government and international community must commit – in both words and action – to upholding and protecting the rights of all Iraqis without discrimination. Nothing is more essential to foster the conditions for national reconciliation and a just and sustainable peace in Iraq.

# 2. METHODOLOGY

This report is based on research carried out between October 2017 and March 2018, including two field research trips in Iraq conducted between 7 and 16 December 2017 and 15 and 29 January 2018. During these trips, Amnesty International researchers conducted interviews at eight camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs): Hamam al-Alil, Jedaa 1, Jedaa 3, Jedaa 6, Nimrud, Qayyara Airstrip and Salamiya, all in Ninewa governorate, and al-Shahama in Salah al-Din governorate.

In these IDP camps, three Amnesty International researchers interviewed a total of 92 women who were members of female-headed households. All were civilians. Of these 92 interviewees, 64 told Amnesty International they had immediate or extended family members who were involved with IS in some way, 13 reported having no affiliation with IS and 15 did not comment on their affiliation. The majority of interviews were carried out on a one-to-one basis, while the rest were conducted in small groups consisting of the interviewee and a few immediate family members. Camp or local authorities were not present during interviews.

Amnesty International sought to interview members of female-headed households living in IDP camps who had fled IS-held areas after January 2017. In some cases, social workers or staff members of international NGOs identified women who faced particular risks and were willing to speak with Amnesty International. In other cases, Amnesty International identified sections of IDP camps primarily comprised of female-headed households, including women with perceived ties to IS, on the basis of guidance from staff members of humanitarian organizations, members of camp administrations, journalists and other camp residents, and carried out interviews in these sections. Interviews were conducted in Arabic or using Arabic-English translation.

Amnesty International interviewed 11 staff members of camp administrations, 24 staff members of international NGOs, six staff members of national NGOs, nine current or former UN officials and three journalists with expertise on families with perceived ties to IS. Researchers also reviewed relevant reports from UN agencies, international NGOs, local monitoring groups and the media.

Due to their requests that they remain anonymous for their own security or the security of their family members, Amnesty International has changed the names of the interviewees in this report. Interviewees' names therefore appear in quotation marks. To preserve the anonymity of the witnesses, the locations of the interviews are not specified, and key identifying details such as the interviewee's place of origin have sometimes been omitted. The age of interviewees mentioned is valid at the time of the interview. The names of staff members of international and national NGOs have also been omitted at their request, in order to preserve their anonymity and ability to work without constraints in IDP camps and other places in Iraq.

This report focuses on abuses faced by female-headed households with perceived IS affiliation rather than on abuses faced by female-headed households in general. This is because, in the course of its documentation, Amnesty International found that women with perceived IS ties faced particular or more acute risks and abuses in several areas – particularly restrictions on access to civil documentation, curbs on freedom of movement, harassment, sexual violence and blocks on returns – than women without such ties.

The report also focuses on Iraqi women and children with perceived IS ties rather than on foreign women and children with such ties. There are three main reasons for this: first, foreign women and children with alleged ties to IS are a relative minority of the overall population of women and children with such ties in Iraq; second, foreign women and children affiliated with IS face different risks from the Iraqi women and children; and third, the experience of these foreign women and children has already received significant attention from the media and international community.



This report focuses on women and children with perceived IS ties who fled IS-controlled areas after January 2017. Their experiences differ slightly from the experiences of those who fled earlier in the conflict. However, their experiences are broadly representative of the greater population of women and children with perceived ties to IS.

On 3 April 2018, Amnesty International communicated the key findings detailed in this report in a memorandum addressed to Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi. No substantive response had been received as of 13 April 2018, when this report was finalized.

# 3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

## 3.1 THE BATTLE AGAINST IS IN IRAQ

### 3.1.1 BACKGROUND AND IMPACT OF THE ARMED CONFLICT

The emergence of IS in Iraq can be linked to a number of interrelated factors. The following are the most frequently cited by experts: the implementation of “de-Baathification” policies in the wake of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, which excluded many Sunni Arabs from public service and political processes in Iraq; the failure of Iraqi governments in the ensuing decade to address Sunni grievances; the targeting of members of the Sunni community through arbitrary arrests by the security forces, often followed by unfair trials and other abuses in the criminal justice system; and the ability of al-Qa’ida in Iraq, and subsequently IS, to provoke discord between sects and to exploit deteriorating Sunni-Shi’a relations as a source of recruitment and resources.<sup>1</sup>

In December 2013, armed conflict broke out in Anbar governorate involving Iraqi forces, armed groups and local residents. The clashes followed a year of largely peaceful protests against government policies by mostly Sunni residents in Anbar, Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates. IS took advantage of the violence and instability to seize Falluja, the second-largest city in Anbar, in January 2014. By mid-2014, IS had gained control of large parts of Anbar, Diyala, Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates, including the city of Mosul on 10 June 2014. By early August 2014, IS had gained even more territory, including areas in Makhmour and Sinjar districts in Ninewa governorate.<sup>2</sup>

In mid-2014, Iraqi and Kurdish authorities, with the support of a coalition of states led by the USA, engaged in military operations to regain territory from IS. Anti-IS forces comprised a wide array of military actors: Iraqi forces, including the Counter-Terrorism Services, Federal Police and Emergency Response Division; the Popular Mobilization Units<sup>3</sup> (PMU or *al-Hashd al-Shaabi*), an umbrella grouping of predominantly Shi’a militias, which was formally inducted into the Iraqi forces on 8 March 2018; the Tribal Mobilization militias (*al-Hashd al-Ashairi*), composed of fighters from Sunni tribes; Kurdish Peshmerga forces; and the US-led

---

1 For more details, see “Islamic State crisis: The rise of jihadists in Iraq and Syria”, BBC, 3 October 2014, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-29445063](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-29445063); “How IS came to be”, *The Guardian*, 22 August 2014, [www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/22/syria-iraq-incubators-isis-jihad](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/22/syria-iraq-incubators-isis-jihad); Amnesty International, *‘Punished for Daesh’s crimes’: Displaced Iraqis abused by militias and government forces* (Index: MDE 14/4962/2016; hereinafter: Amnesty International, *‘Punished for Daesh’s crimes’*); Human Rights Watch, *Flawed justice: Accountability for ISIS crimes in Iraq*, December 2017, [www.hrw.org/report/2017/12/05/flawed-justice/accountability-isis-crimes-iraq](http://www.hrw.org/report/2017/12/05/flawed-justice/accountability-isis-crimes-iraq) (hereinafter: Human Rights Watch, *Flawed justice*), Section I.

2 Amnesty International, *‘Punished for Daesh’s crimes’*.

3 In this report, the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) are not referred to as separate paramilitary forces or pro-government militias, as they have been referenced in prior outputs from Amnesty International. Instead, they are referenced as being included in the Iraqi forces. This is because the Iraqi government has now formally inducted the PMU into the Iraqi security forces. For more details, see “Iraq’s Shi’ite militias formally inducted into security forces”, Reuters, 8 March 2018, [www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-militias/iraqs-shiite-militias-formally-inducted-into-security-forces-idUSKCN1GK354](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-militias/iraqs-shiite-militias-formally-inducted-into-security-forces-idUSKCN1GK354)

coalition, which included a number of states in addition to the USA, some of the most active of which were Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.<sup>4</sup>

By December, anti-IS forces had recaptured the territory and population centres held by IS in Iraq, which once had comprised nearly one third of the country and millions of Iraqis.<sup>5</sup> On 9 December 2017, after three years of armed conflict, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared victory over IS.

The conflict involving IS in Iraq has had a huge impact on civilians. As of January 2018, more than 2.6 million people remain internally displaced and 8.7 million are in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>6</sup> Almost a million people were displaced in Ninewa governorate solely as a result of the military operation to recapture Mosul and its surrounding areas.<sup>7</sup>

### 3.1.2 VIOLATIONS BY IS

Since IS emerged in Iraq, Amnesty International has documented the crimes carried out by the armed group, which include war crimes and crimes against humanity.<sup>8</sup> During the armed conflict with anti-IS forces, IS forcibly displaced thousands of civilians into zones of active hostilities in an attempt to shield their own fighters. The armed group also deliberately killed civilians who were trying to flee the fighting. The armed group carried out execution-style killings against opponents, and recruited and deployed child soldiers. In Mosul, IS fighters occupied medical buildings and hospitals to avoid being targeted by Iraqi and coalition forces.<sup>9</sup>

IS has targeted minority communities including Christians, Yazidis, Shi'a Shabak and Shi'a Turkmen. In August 2014, it targeted the Yazidi population in a series of attacks in Sinjar, executing at least 2,000 individuals and abducting thousands.<sup>10</sup> IS then subjected thousands of Yazidi women and girls to rape, sexual assault and other forms of torture and enslavement. In June 2016, the UN-mandated Commission of Inquiry for Syria found that IS had committed the crime of genocide against the Yazidi community in Syria and Iraq.<sup>11</sup> IS has also systematically targeted Shi'a Muslims. In one incident in June 2014 it summarily killed as many as 1,700 Shi'a cadets at Speicher training camp, near Tikrit.<sup>12</sup> IS has killed and injured civilians across Iraq in suicide bombings and other attacks that deliberately targeted civilians in predominantly Shi'a Muslim areas.

### 3.1.3 VIOLATIONS BY ANTI-IS FORCES

In the context of the battle involving IS, Iraqi, Kurdish and coalition forces committed repeated violations of international humanitarian law, some of which may amount to war crimes. In west Mosul, Iraqi and coalition forces launched a series of disproportionate or otherwise indiscriminate attacks. In one such attack, on 17 March in Mosul al-Jadida neighbourhood, at least 105 civilians were killed by a US air strike targeting two IS snipers.<sup>13</sup> In west Mosul, Iraqi forces consistently used explosive weapons with wide-area effects, such as improvised rocket-assisted munitions (IRAMs), which cannot be precisely targeted at military objectives or used lawfully in populated civilian areas. In east Mosul, hundreds of civilians were killed in air strikes launched by the coalition and Iraqi forces on their homes or places where they sought refuge after they followed Iraqi government instructions not to leave during the battle.

---

4 For a full list of coalition members, see Operation Inherent Resolve, "About us: Coalition", 2017, [www.inherentresolve.mil/About-Us/Coalition/](http://www.inherentresolve.mil/About-Us/Coalition/)

5 "Iraq Prime Minister declares victory over ISIS", *The New York Times*, 9 December 2017, [www.nytimes.com/2017/12/09/world/middleeast/iraq-isis-haider-al-abadi.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/09/world/middleeast/iraq-isis-haider-al-abadi.html)

6 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Iraq: Key figures", February 2018, [www.unocha.org/iraq](http://www.unocha.org/iraq)

7 UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Flash update", 20 November 2017, [www.reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20171120%20UNHCR%20Iraq%20Flash%20Update.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20171120%20UNHCR%20Iraq%20Flash%20Update.pdf)

8 Amnesty International, *Escape from hell: Torture and sexual slavery in Islamic State captivity in Iraq* (Index: MDE 14/021/2014); Amnesty International, *Iraq: Ethnic cleansing on a historic scale* (Index: MDE 14/011/2014); Amnesty International, "Iraq: Yazidi survivors of horrific abuse in IS captivity neglected by international community" (Press release, 10 October 2016), [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/10/iraq-yezidi-survivors-of-horrific-abuse-in-is-captivity-neglected-by-international-community/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/10/iraq-yezidi-survivors-of-horrific-abuse-in-is-captivity-neglected-by-international-community/)

9 For more details, see Amnesty International, *At any cost: The civilian catastrophe in west Mosul* (Index: MDE 14/6610/2017).

10 UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, "Statement by Mr. György Busztin, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General at the commemoration of attacks against Yazidis", 3 August 2017, [www.reliefweb.int/report/iraq/statement-mr-gy-rgy-busztin-deputy-special-representative-secretary-general](http://www.reliefweb.int/report/iraq/statement-mr-gy-rgy-busztin-deputy-special-representative-secretary-general)

11 Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, *They came to destroy: ISIS crimes against the Yazidis*, 15 June 2016, [www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/ColSyria/A\\_HRC\\_32\\_CRP.2\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/ColSyria/A_HRC_32_CRP.2_en.pdf)

12 Amnesty International, *'Punished for Daesh's crimes'*.

13 Amnesty International, *At any cost: The civilian catastrophe in west Mosul* (Index: MDE 14/6610/2017).

Iraqi forces, including the PMU, and Kurdish forces have also carried out extrajudicial executions of men and boys suspected of being affiliated with IS.<sup>14</sup> They arbitrarily arrested thousands of people with a perceived affiliation to IS, many of whom were then tortured and detained in horrific conditions. Many of these detainees were executed by hanging on the basis of torture-tainted confessions.<sup>15</sup> Iraqi forces, including the PMU, and Kurdish forces also forcibly displaced civilians and destroyed their homes on a mass scale.<sup>16</sup>

#### WHAT MAKES A FAMILY AN 'IS FAMILY'

According to Iraqis interviewed for this report, members of camp administrations in IDP camps and local and international humanitarian workers, several factors, some of which are interrelated and overlapping, determine which families are perceived by security forces and others in their communities to be affiliated with IS. Perhaps the most determinative factor is if the family has a relative who was a member of IS. The perception of an affiliation to IS can exist even if the relative is a distant relative, with no relationship by blood. It may also exist in cases where the relative was not an IS fighter or commander, but worked in non-combat roles, such as an administrative employee, driver or cook. Other determinative factors include: if the family lived in an area that was a stronghold of support for IS; if the family lived in an area that was controlled by IS and then fled that area at a late stage in the hostilities; if the family belongs to a tribe of which the majority supported IS; or if one or more male members of the family were arrested as they fled IS-held territory or after they arrived at an IDP camp.

## 3.2 TRAUMA AND SUFFERING AS A RESULT OF THE CONFLICT

Members of female-headed families with perceived IS ties endured traumatic experiences during the hostilities between IS and anti-IS forces. For many, the effects of these experiences on their mental health have been persistent and debilitating. They described struggling to stay alive during the fighting and witnessing the death of family members. Several reported that they or their children were now affected by serious injuries caused by the fighting. “Hanan”, a 46-year-old woman, shared her experience of the battle:

*We were sheltering in the Old City [in west Mosul]. For four or five nights, there were constant air strikes. I didn't know where to go. If I stayed on the IS side, they might have shot me, and the same for the Iraqi side. There was an air strike on our house on 4 July [2017]. The strike killed my sister-in-law, and my son lost his arm. My older daughter lost one of her eyes, and her hand is now badly damaged... We decided to go to the Iraqi army, so we moved to another house where 300 people were staying together. On 8 July, a mortar hit, and my other son died along with two others... I had to go to the hospital in al-Jamhuri neighbourhood, because I was injured... I left my son behind – I didn't bury him, we just had to keep moving. When I arrived at the hospital, I washed my feet, and it was my son's blood that I was washing off. His body parts were on my clothes, on my skin.<sup>17</sup>*

Several women told Amnesty International that their family members had died after finding shelter in an IDP camp, due to injuries from the fighting. For instance, “Dunia”, a 45-year-old woman, described the fate of her daughter after she was injured in an air strike in June 2017:

*My daughter had severe damage in her brain because of the smoke from that explosion. She was taken to a clinic in Bartella, and then to the American clinic at Hamam al-Alii... She had seizures after the smoke inhalation, and they said they couldn't do anything to make her better. They said the only option would be a private clinic. I didn't have enough money – they were asking too much*

14 See, for example, Amnesty International, “Investigate reports Iraqi forces tortured and killed villagers near Mosul in ‘cold blood’” (Press release, 10 November 2016), [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/11/investigate-reports-iraqi-forces-tortured-and-killed-villagers-near-mosul-in-cold-blood/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/11/investigate-reports-iraqi-forces-tortured-and-killed-villagers-near-mosul-in-cold-blood/); Human Rights Watch, “Kurdistan Regional Government: Allegations of mass executions”, 8 February 2018, [www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/08/kurdistan-regional-government-allegations-mass-executions](http://www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/08/kurdistan-regional-government-allegations-mass-executions).

15 For more details, see “Impact of Enforced Disappearance”, below.

16 See, for example, Amnesty International, “Where are we supposed to go?: Destruction and forced displacement in Kirkuk (Index: MDE 14/5094/2016).

17 Interview with “Hanan” (real name withheld) on 12 December 2017.

*from me. She spent 15 more days in the camp... At first she was OK, but after, maybe because it was summer and the tent was so hot, she died... She was seven years old.*<sup>18</sup>

“Anhar”, a 56-year-old woman, explained how her experience of the fighting is still affecting her mental state:

*In June 2017, we were staying with 14 other families in one house, near the river [in west Mosul]... I was outside bringing water from the river when the strike came. [My son] Baha and my daughter were with me, and they ran ahead. Just as Baha entered the building, it fell... I made a small hole in the ground – I put him there so that I could find him later and give him a proper burial. He was four years old. One of the other men in the house was injured in the attack, and he was buried under the rubble. His hand grabbed my foot as I was running away, but I had to keep running. This is the reason I can't go outside of the tent. I am still scared to go outside – I imagine that hand reaching out for my ankle... I can't sleep at night... I am so tired. I am too tired to think about all of this. I don't want to think any more... I am really a strong woman, but in [Mosul] and here in the camp, human life means nothing. I am finished.*<sup>19</sup>

---

18 Interviews with “Dunia” (real name withheld) on 12 December and 14 December 2017.

19 Interview with “Anhar” (real name withheld) on 14 December 2017.

## ATTITUDES TOWARD IS

Women with immediate or extended family members who were involved with IS have expressed diverse attitudes toward the armed group and shared different explanations for why their relatives joined. Several women interviewed for this report cited as the primary reason their relatives had joined IS the treatment to which they had been subjected by the Iraqi authorities or paramilitary militias – including arbitrary arrests, forced displacement and discrimination – in the years preceding IS's takeover of their villages or neighbourhoods. For instance, "Anhar" said:

*In 2005, American and Iraqi forces were carrying out raids in the day and night, into our homes. When the Iraqi army came to us, I was really polite with them to protect my family. I gave them lunch, and they ate it. Then they arrested my husband and my son... They took my son to Abu Ghraib [prison]. He was 12 years old then, and he was sentenced to six months in prison. It was just a random arrest. Because our family suffered so much before IS from the Iraqi forces, when IS came, we joined them... I wasn't satisfied with [IS's] ideology – I didn't agree with how they were killing civilians... But I hate the Iraqi government. When they attacked us [in the raids] they would slap the children, [they would] do anything... They would make us leave our homes in our nightgowns. This is the war. If they had respected me, I would have respected them.<sup>20</sup>*

"Jihan", a 27-year-old woman, offered a similar explanation: "My husband joined IS because the [Iraqi] army killed his younger brother. The Americans always attacked their house and, after they left, the army did the same. One day they attacked the house apparently looking for terrorists... [My husband's] brother was so scared and, when he ran, they shot him in the leg. He died." She later contrasted the years preceding IS with living under IS's control. "Nobody asked us for our IDs in these past three years [under IS]," she said. "[IS] told us, 'This is your country. You don't need an ID.'"<sup>21</sup> "Nouran" added: "In 2008, the Badr Brigades and Mahdi Army [militia groups that operated in Iraq before they were brought under the PMU umbrella] made us leave our house. My son joined IS because he was upset. He saw how we were made homeless and didn't dare speak up."<sup>22</sup>

Some women who were married to men with ties to the Iraqi government explained that, if their husbands had not joined IS, they would have been killed. According to "Riham", a 41-year-old woman: "My husband was a policeman, and they forced him to be with IS... They said, 'If you don't work with us, we will destroy you.' He had diabetes and high blood pressure, so he couldn't be a fighter. He was cooking and cleaning for them."<sup>23</sup>

Several women told Amnesty International that their husbands or sons had joined IS either because the armed group had offered to help them in some way or because they needed to earn enough money to survive. For instance, 42-year-old "Sama" said: "Just at the end of the fighting, my husband joined IS... He worked with them as a mechanic... They said that, if he joined, they would look after our son, who is disabled... My son can't walk, and I have to lift him from the bed to go to the bathroom. He is eight years old... My husband joined only because of my son – to get treatment for him. But then they did nothing for us."<sup>24</sup> "Asil", a 39-year-old woman, said: "[My husband] spent just one year as a fighter with IS... The reason he joined was because there was no food and no water, so we felt like we had to join. We got a salary when he was with them."<sup>25</sup>

Many women emphasized the fact that they had no choice but to go along with their husbands' decisions to join IS. For instance, 50-year-old "Yara" said: "I had no choice in any of this. Someone convinced my husband to be a fighter... I want to ask... what is the fault of these children, and these women?"<sup>26</sup> Several other women said that they agreed with the religious values of IS, but did not agree with their brutal methods. "Asil" explained: "I accepted them on the one hand, and I rejected them on the other. I really liked their religious ideology – the women wearing hijab and staying in the home – I prefer this. But I didn't like the violence that they used."<sup>27</sup>

Several women told Amnesty International that they had tried to convince their husbands and sons not to join IS. "Rania", 37, told Amnesty International that her husband taught Arabic to a group of IS fighters in Mosul city before he was killed in an air strike in January 2017. She explained her attitude toward the armed group:

*I rejected IS. I didn't like my husband working with them. From the very moment he joined, I was asking him to leave. I can't understand why he wanted to stay with them. But he came to trust the IS fighters, and they liked him a lot. He was lovely and helpful to everyone. I think this is why he stayed with them. I still think about the fate of my husband. I knew this could happen... Some of the IS fighters were good, and some were bad. The system was bad – but as for the people, there are always good and bad in every system.<sup>28</sup>*

Forty-six-year-old “Iman” added: “My husband was brainwashed. He had always been very religious... And when [IS] came, he said this is the right path. I fought him. I told him [IS] would not last and to think of his sons.”<sup>29</sup>

Even if she had disliked or rejected IS, almost every woman who was asked said that she preferred the time when she lived under IS to her current situation. “Dalia”, a 48-year-old woman whose two sons were arrested and forcibly disappeared by Kurdish forces at a screening site in Hamdaniya, expressed a typical sentiment:

*Under IS, we had to wear the niqab [full face veil], and there were no mobile phones, and no TV. But we were not under threat, and no one harassed us. It's better to not have a mobile phone than to feel threatened. We were comfortable under IS... and we were together – all of us, as a family. The problems for us were from the air strikes and the mortars, but even that was better than this. We are ready to go through anything if we are together.*<sup>30</sup>

“Samar”, a 26-year-old woman, explained: “We are facing so much abuse after IS. During IS, we were safe under their protection. They provided security and respect to the women.”<sup>31</sup> Her mother, 54-year-old “Zeinab”, continued: “The situation now is really the worst – there is no respect, no protection, and we own nothing.”<sup>32</sup> According to 21-year-old “Rubaa”: “In my point of view, IS is much better than the PMU. IS have more respect for women. They protected us. We had human rights under IS.”<sup>33</sup>

---

20 Interview with “Anhar” (real name withheld) on 14 December 2017.

21 Interview with “Jihan” (real name withheld) on 12 December 2017.

22 Interview with “Nouran” (real name withheld) on 28 January 2018. For more details on the Badr Brigades and Mahdi Army, see Amnesty International, *Absolute impunity: Militia rule in Iraq* (Index: MDE 14/015/2014).

23 Interview with “Riham” (real name withheld) on 14 December 2017.

24 Interview with “Sama” (real name withheld) on 15 December 2017.

25 Interview with “Asil” (real name withheld) on 25 January 2018.

26 Interview with “Yara” (real name withheld) on 11 December 2017.

27 Interview with “Asil” (real name withheld) on 25 January 2018.

28 Interview with “Rania” (real name withheld) on 21 January 2018.

29 Interview with “Iman” (real name withheld) on 25 January 2018.

30 Interview with “Dalia” (real name withheld) on 10 December 2017.

31 Interview with “Zeinab” (real name withheld) on 20 January 2018.

32 Interview with “Samar” (real name withheld) on 20 January 2018.

33 Interview with “Rubaa” (real name withheld) on 19 January 2018.

# 4. IMPACT OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

**“We need our men back – or at least to know what happened to them. We are lost and know nothing. We want to face reality and get ready for the next stage in life, instead of just waiting.”**

“Abeer”, member of female-headed household in Jedaa 6 camp<sup>34</sup>

Since 2014, there has been a wave of arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances of men and boys fleeing IS-held areas. These arrests have been carried out by Iraqi forces, including the PMU, and Kurdish forces. This chapter first sets out the massive scale of these enforced disappearances, which has so far been unacknowledged by the Iraqi government and the international community. It considers the rudimentary methods of “screening” employed by the authorities, which, lacking in the most fundamental safeguards, have led to the arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance of thousands of men and boys. It then explores the impact of these enforced disappearances on the many thousands of families left behind.

## 4.1 SCALE AND PATTERNS OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Women interviewed for this report described to Amnesty International their desperate searches for any information on husbands and sons who had been arrested as they fled IS-held areas by Iraqi and Kurdish forces. The majority of the women reported that state agents denied holding their relatives or refused to provide information on their whereabouts. In such cases, the men and boys concerned were subjected to enforced disappearance – when a person is arrested, detained or abducted by a state or state agents, who then deny that the person is being held or conceal their whereabouts, placing them outside the protection of the law. Enforced disappearance is in itself a crime under international law and places individuals at grave risk of extrajudicial execution, torture and other gross human rights violations.

The scale of enforced disappearances in the context of the conflict involving IS in Iraq has been massive, and, to date, almost entirely unacknowledged by the Iraqi government or the international community. Thousands of men and boys have been forcibly disappeared by Iraqi and Kurdish forces since 2014.<sup>35</sup> Solely

<sup>34</sup> Interview with “Abeer” (real name withheld) on 12 December 2017.

<sup>35</sup> The exact number of men and boys who have been forcibly disappeared as a result of their perceived affiliation to IS is unclear, as neither government authorities nor international and national monitoring groups have issued reliable public figures. However, Amnesty International is confident that the number of men and boys who have been forcibly disappeared by Iraqi and Kurdish forces has reached several thousand at least, based on discussions with informed interlocutors operating in Iraq.



during the course of the research for this report, which involved interviews with 92 members of female-headed families who had fled IS-held areas since 2017, Amnesty International recorded evidence that 53 individuals had been subjected to enforced disappearance by Iraqi and Kurdish forces.

In Mosul and its surrounding areas, the majority of arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances originated at screening sites near the front lines of the battle, which were overseen by Iraqi forces, including the PMU, and Kurdish forces. Families who fled IS-held areas arrived at these sites in groups of varying sizes, usually between dozens and hundreds of people. Upon arrival, men and boys over the age of 13 would be separated from the women and other children.<sup>36</sup>

These men and boys would then be screened for IS affiliation. All of the methods of screening used by the authorities raise serious due process concerns and lacked basic safeguards to prevent ill-treatment. There was no judicial oversight. Men and boys who were arrested were not given access to legal representation. And families were not told where their relatives were being taken or how they could communicate with them.

The authorities' determination of affiliation was primarily based on whether the names of the men and boys appeared on "wanted lists" contained in various computer databases. The "wanted lists" used at the screening sites have been compiled since 2014 by various security agencies and are based largely on publicly available information about IS members as well as on information provided by informants and community members.<sup>37</sup> An individual's name could be included on these lists if he had been somehow involved with IS – whether as a fighter or commander or, in a non-combat role, as a driver, cook or administrative employee. His name could also be included on the lists if his relatives – however distant – were involved with IS, or if community members suggested his name to take revenge for personal or tribal grievances.<sup>38</sup> In addition, scores of men and boys were arrested during screening simply because their names were similar to names contained on the wanted lists.<sup>39</sup>

Affiliation could also be confirmed by a "masked man", often a member of the community, who would be asked to point out which of the men and boys in his community, village or neighbourhood were affiliated with IS.<sup>40</sup> "Husam", who fled from al-Oobur village, near Mosul, described this method of screening: "When we got to the transit camp, the [PMU] took a lot of men... They brought masked informers to point to the men. Whoever he pointed to was dragged away. Men were shaking even if they had nothing to hide."<sup>41</sup> Men and boys who fled from areas perceived to be IS strongholds or who fled IS-held territory in the late stages of a battle were also often arrested.<sup>42</sup> Men and boys would often be beaten immediately after they were separated from the women and other children.

"Dunia" described her experience at a screening site outside Mosul:

*There were around 200 in our group, all civilians... The Iraqi forces took us across the river – we walked over the bridge. When we arrived on the other side, there was a large building on the river, and they separated us. The men went on one side, and the women and children on the other. There were probably 50 men, and none of them came with us after that. They are all still gone. The last time I saw them was that day.<sup>43</sup>*

Iraqi forces, including the PMU, have also regularly arrested and forcibly disappeared men with perceived IS ties directly from IDP camps.<sup>44</sup> One such arrest was described by "Haneen", a 56-year-old woman. She told Amnesty International that her 20-year-old son was arrested and forcibly disappeared from an IDP camp in Ninewa governorate. She believed the arrest, which was carried out by the PMU militia active in her village, was carried out because her other sons had fought with IS. She said:

*[The PMU] came on 2 May 2017, around 9.30 or 10am. They came in a civilian car and were wearing civilian clothes, but they were carrying weapons. There were four or five of them. They took my son from the tent, and they beat him and my other sons. We recognized some of the men who*

---

36 Details of the screening process were consistently reported to Amnesty International in interviews it conducted with members of female-headed households as well as with staff members of humanitarian organizations and other monitors present at screening sites in December 2017 and January 2018.

37 For more details, see Human Rights Watch, *Flawed justice*, p. 23.

38 Human Rights Watch, *Flawed justice*.

39 Telephone interviews with international humanitarian workers on 11 February and 27 February 2018.

40 Interviews with "Zeinab" (real name withheld) on 19 January 2018 and "Asil" (real name withheld) on 25 January 2018. Information from these interviews complemented consistent details obtained from other interviews conducted in March and May 2017 for Amnesty International for the report *At any cost: The civilian catastrophe in west Mosul* (Index: MDE 14/6610/2017).

41 Interview with "Husam" (real name withheld) on 24 January 2018.

42 See "What Makes a Family an 'IS Family'" for more details on which factors typically lead others to perceive a family as being affiliated with IS. Many of these factors also determine whether an individual would be arrested at a given screening site.

43 Interview with "Dunia" (real name withheld) on 14 December 2017.

44 Interviews with "Haneen" (real name withheld) on 23 January 2018, "Hanin" and "Rima" (real names withheld) on 23 January 2018, and "Dana" (real name withheld) on 24 January 2018; interview with staff member of international NGO on 15 February 2018.

*took him. They are from our community... I was baking bread nearby. I came and found them beating him. They were punching him with their fists and kicking him. They put him in the car and, when I ran after it, they pushed me away... He was a student – he had just graduated before IS came.*<sup>45</sup>

## 4.2 TORTURE, INHUMAN CONDITIONS AND EXECUTIONS

According to prior documentation by Amnesty International as well as that of other human rights organizations, some of the men and boys subjected to arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance by Iraqi and Kurdish forces have been extrajudicially executed.<sup>46</sup> Those who are not killed enter a vast network of official and unofficial detention centres, which are controlled by the Iraqi Ministries of the Interior and Defence, the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), the Iraqi forces including the PMU and other government-aligned militias. Detainees held in these centres are routinely subjected to torture. Some of the most common forms include beatings on the head and body with metal rods and cables, suspension in stress positions by the arms or legs and the use of electric shocks. Men and boys also face horrific and inhuman conditions in detention, with limited access to food, water and medical care as well as severe overcrowding and lack of access to showers or toilets. Detainees' "confessions", which are often extracted under torture, are routinely used as the basis of death sentences, leading to executions by hanging.<sup>47</sup>

## 4.3 IMPACT OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE ON FAMILIES LEFT BEHIND

Due to this wave of enforced disappearances – as well as the fact that many men were killed or went missing during the battle against IS in Iraq – there are now thousands upon thousands of female-headed families with a perceived affiliation to IS struggling for survival in Iraq. They are demanding answers as to where their family members are being held and whether they are even still alive.

"Dalia" told Amnesty International that her two sons, aged 25 and 30, were arrested on 28 August 2017 at Hamdaniya checkpoint by the PMU. She shared her experience after they fled Tal Afar:

*The Kurdish and Iraqi forces put us on a large bus, and when we arrived at the PMU [checkpoint], every man in our group was arrested... They arrested the men and took their phones. They even took our photos, so I don't have a photo of my sons now... I just would like any information on my two sons. Do they eat, do they bathe? They are so young. One of my sons has always been handicapped, and [the PMU forces] beat him in front of me... We know they are torturing them now... After four months, we have no information about them. Nobody can help us. No amount of money, and no wasta [connections] will help. We heard that someone was released for US\$7,000 or 8,000, but that kind of money is unthinkable for us.*<sup>48</sup>

"Rubaa" told Amnesty International that her 27-year-old brother had been arrested by Kurdish forces in late August 2017 at a school in Sahil al-Malih.<sup>49</sup> She described his arrest and its effects on her family:

*They brought us to the school... They took all of the men, including my brother. He was really sick, even then, but they arrested him. He couldn't walk or run away. Even if he tried to work for an hour, he would need to rest. He was selling sweets in a sweet shop. He couldn't fight with IS. He couldn't even run. He was married with two sons... We saw him taken, and he was left in the courtyard at the school, under the sun. He was there from the morning until 4pm in the afternoon. They were just sitting there without water. We were in the classrooms, and we could see what was*

---

45 Interview with "Haneen" (real name withheld) on 23 January 2018.

46 See, for example, Amnesty International, *'Punished for Daesh's crimes'*; Human Rights Watch, "Kurdistan Regional Government: Allegations of mass executions", February 2018, [www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/08/kurdistan-regional-government-allegations-mass-executions](http://www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/08/kurdistan-regional-government-allegations-mass-executions)

47 For further details on the violations faced by individuals arrested on terrorism charges, see Amnesty International, *'Punished for Daesh's crimes'*, Chapters 6-8; and Human Rights Watch, *Flawed justice*.

48 Interview with "Dalia" (real name withheld) on 10 December 2017.

49 For more information on the arrests carried out by Kurdish forces in Sahil al-Malih school between 28 August and 3 September 2017, see Human Rights Watch, "Kurdistan Regional Government: Allegations of mass executions", 8 February 2018, [www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/08/kurdistan-regional-government-allegations-mass-executions](http://www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/08/kurdistan-regional-government-allegations-mass-executions)

*happening... They were beating them with their fists... Then we saw the men leaving in buses. We were crying. I am still suffering from this now.*<sup>50</sup>

“Rahaf”, her mother, continued:

*My priority is to know where [my son] is, what he is doing... The most important thing to us is my son. Our situation will improve, I hope – but what about for him? We really hope that our son will come back, and he will build a house. Then we can join him there. I really want to get out of this tent. The life in this tent is so difficult. In the winter, it's freezing... We're really alone here. I have only one son, and they arrested him. If my son got released, maybe I could go back to Mosul... [Without him] it's hard to go back. They assume we are IS, because my son is detained.*<sup>51</sup>

Several women told Amnesty International that they were disappointed and angry at the lack of systematic response by the international community. For instance, “Zeinab” said: “There is no one helping us find our missing relatives. We share the information with all of the organizations that come to the camp, but they don't even care.”<sup>52</sup> “Maya”, an 18-year-old woman, shared her exasperation with her situation: “You know what we are scared of most? We're scared we'll die waiting.”<sup>53</sup>

---

50 Interview with “Rubaa” (real name withheld) on 19 January 2018.

51 Interview with “Rahaf” (real name withheld) on 19 January 2018.

52 Interview with “Zeinab” (real name withheld) on 20 January 2018.

53 Interview with “Maya” (real name withheld) on 20 January 2018.

# 5. VIOLATIONS, ABUSES AND RISKS IN IDP CAMPS

**“Life here [in the camp] is constant humiliation... If your husband was with IS, he’d force you to go with them. Then he dies and you get punished after him. What is the fault of women and children? ... As long as we live we will have to accept everything bad that happens to us.”**

“Farah”, 18-year-old member of female-headed household in Jedaa 6 Camp<sup>54</sup>

Women and children with perceived ties to IS who live in IDP camps in Iraq have been subjected to a series of serious human rights violations. This chapter describes how many of these families are denied access to food, water and health care due to their perceived affiliation. It details the consequences of them being routinely blocked from obtaining new or replacement identity cards and other civil documents, as well as the severe restrictions on their freedom of movement. It then documents the verbal harassment, including sexual harassment and intimidation, that families have faced from armed actors, camp authorities and other camp residents. Finally, it explains how women with perceived IS ties, among other women from female-headed households, have been subjected to sexual violence, including rape and sexual exploitation, primarily by armed actors present in the camps.<sup>55</sup>

## 5.1 ACCESS TO FOOD, WATER AND HEALTH CARE

*“The treatment here depends on who you are, and who your family is.”*

“Dalia”, member of female-headed household in Nimrud camp<sup>56</sup>

Female-headed families have reported being denied access to food, water, non-food items and health care in IDP camps as a result of their perceived affiliation to IS.<sup>57</sup> The women interviewed for this report told

---

54 Interview with “Farah” (real name withheld) on 12 December 2017.

55 On 3 April 2017, the Iraqi Prime Minister issued a directive according to which all armed actors are prohibited from entering IDP camps. The directive is on file with Amnesty International.

56 Interview with “Dalia” on 10 December 2017.

57 International humanitarian workers have told Amnesty International that families with perceived ties to IS who live outside of the IDP camps also face limits on their access to humanitarian aid and health care. Skype interview with international humanitarian worker on 11 February 2018 and interview with international humanitarian worker in Beirut, Lebanon, on 15 February 2018. According to Human Rights Watch, security forces and residents of Mosul have also prevented international aid organizations from providing basic humanitarian

Amnesty International that they were denied aid or health care by members of the camp administration, by staff members of international or national humanitarian organizations or by other individuals tasked with distributing aid in the camp.

“Fatima” shared a typical account, describing the treatment she faced when she approached a humanitarian worker during a distribution of water containers. She told Amnesty International:

*I went to [the staff member of a national NGO in charge of distribution] and begged him for one of those containers they give out for water. He told me, “You do not deserve it.” So I had to buy it from [another camp resident] for 20,000 Iraqi dinars [the equivalent of US\$17]... I bought from him what I was supposed to get if there was any justice... In July, [the same NGO staff member] said he wouldn’t give heaters to “IS families”, so I had to sell the cooking oil we had and buy one.<sup>58</sup>*

“Israa”, a 44-year-old woman, shared her experience:

*During the visit of [a local aid organization], they were going to distribute kitchen supplies: dishes, spoons and a food basket. When one family approached them, they said: “You are an IS family – you don’t get anything.” They beat them with a stick. During that distribution, 50 families left without anything, including ours. They said they would come the next day, but they never came back.<sup>59</sup>*

“Anhar” told Amnesty International: “The other people in the camp harass us. They treat us terribly. The water man prevents us from taking water. When my daughter went out to get water, he kicked over her container and refused to give her any water. When I asked him why, he said terrible words to me.”<sup>60</sup> “Manal” added: “When we go to get water here, [the humanitarian aid workers distributing the water] say, ‘Only one bucket for the IS families’... [The] NGO workers taunt us when we go to get water.”<sup>61</sup>

Several women with perceived IS ties told Amnesty International that armed actors present in the camp harassed them during distributions or prevented them from accessing aid. For instance, according to 39-year-old “Huda”: “When [women with perceived ties to IS] go stand [in line] for the distribution, the [Iraqi] army stands on the other side of the fence and hurls insults at us the whole time. Some women break down in tears and don’t go back. Others who have children have to put up with it.”<sup>62</sup> “Lina” added: “In the summer, when we would go to the main gate to collect the food, *al-Hashd al-Shaabi* [PMU] would tell us we didn’t deserve it because we’re with IS. We would return to our tents with nothing. We are the weakest people. We can’t say anything. So we just turned around and went back to our tents with empty hands.”<sup>63</sup>

Some women also reported that they or their families were prevented from accessing medical care in clinics inside or nearby IDP camps due to their perceived ties to IS. For instance, “Maha”, whose son’s eyes were injured by a land mine explosion when he was fleeing Aiyadhiya, a village near Tal Afar, told Amnesty International:

*My son had a small stone and dust in his eyes. He spent one week in the hospital [in Hamam al-Ail camp]. In the beginning, they were very helpful. Then they figured out who I was. I am known, because my husband was high-ranking [in IS]. Everyone there rejected me – from the nurses to the doctors – just because we were an IS family. He can’t see much of anything now. One eye has lost its vision completely, and one has 50%.<sup>64</sup>*

“Nour”, a 26-year-old woman, shared a similar account: “In the clinic [run by a local NGO], the nurses say to each other, ‘She is from an ‘IS family’, don’t give her anything.’ My son is diabetic and a syringe costs 100,000 Iraqi dinars [the equivalent of US\$83]. Where do I get that from? There is an MSF [Médecins Sans Frontières] hospital in Qayyara where you can get some medicine for free but [a member of the authorities] refuses to give us the referral we need because he says we are IS.”<sup>65</sup>

Unlike many other families in the camps, female-headed households with perceived IS ties are often estranged from their extended families and communities and are therefore unable to receive financial assistance or aid from outside the camp. They are also often unable to secure employment in the camp due

---

assistance to families if these families are perceived to be affiliated with IS. Human Rights Watch, “Families in Iraq with alleged ISIS ties denied aid: Government should end ‘collective punishment’”, 15 February 2018, [www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/15/families-iraq-alleged-isis-ties-denied-aid](http://www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/15/families-iraq-alleged-isis-ties-denied-aid)

58 Interview with “Fatima” (real name withheld) on 26 January 2018.

59 Interview with “Israa” (real name withheld) on 26 January 2018.

60 Interview with “Anhar” (real name withheld) on 14 December 2017.

61 Interview with “Manal” (real name withheld) on 12 December 2017.

62 Interview with “Huda” (real name withheld) on 23 January 2017.

63 Interview with “Lina” (real name withheld) on 28 January 2018.

64 Interview with “Maha” (real name withheld) on 21 January 2018.

65 Interview with “Nour” (real name withheld) on 26 January 2018.

to their perceived affiliation.<sup>66</sup> The denial of basic humanitarian goods and health care therefore exacerbates their already desperate situation. A social worker based in an IDP camp in Ninewa governorate explained: “The ‘IS widows’ are cut off from the world – they have no salaries, and no money coming in from the outside, so their situation is very bad.”<sup>67</sup>

Due to the number of cases of denial of food, water and health care to families with perceived IS ties that were recorded during the course of research for this report, Amnesty International is concerned that these denials might be organized and perpetrated purposefully by higher levels of authority in the camps, or have occurred due to a culture of discrimination permitted or encouraged by camp authorities. Some humanitarian workers told Amnesty International that such denials had been organized by armed actors who interfered in the distribution of humanitarian aid in IDP camps. A staff member of an international humanitarian organization described the discrimination he had witnessed:

*There is systematic discrimination in who gets aid [in the IDP camps]... The sectors that are made up of “IS families” are treated as less important. For the distributions, there is not always enough for all members of the camp. They [sections mostly consisting of families with perceived IS ties] always receive distributions last, and we can see this from the written distribution records... The camp management is not the main problem [but] someone is allowing the armed groups to come in and influence this.*<sup>68</sup>

Several women in sections largely made up of families with perceived IS ties reported that their sections consistently received their distributions either last or later than other sections in the camp, which meant that they were forced to endure longer periods without humanitarian aid and basic supplies.<sup>69</sup>

## 5.2 CIVIL DOCUMENTATION

*“I don’t have an identity card – nobody will allow us to get a new one. They say, ‘There are no rights for IS families’... They [the camp administration] said that, even if we had documentation, they would tear it up – and even if we get a new identity card, we will be arrested.”*

“Maha”, member of female-headed household in Hamam al-Alil camp<sup>70</sup>

According to the women interviewed for this report and staff members of international and national NGOs, families with perceived ties to IS are routinely blocked from accessing new or replacement identity cards and other civil documents. Without these documents, many women are unable to work, move freely or inherit property or pensions, and their children are often unable to attend school and are at risk of becoming stateless.

Many families who lived under IS control are now living without one or more of their civil documents, including identity and welfare cards; passports; and birth, death and marriage certificates. This is because both IS and anti-IS forces routinely confiscated documents from families. Families also lost their documents as they fled IS-held areas. In addition, civil documents issued by IS have been invalidated by the Iraqi authorities, and must be converted to be valid.<sup>71</sup> Families with perceived IS ties are even more likely to be lacking their essential civil documents, since many purposely disposed of them out of fear that they would confirm their affiliation, or have had them confiscated by the management of the camp in which they reside.<sup>72</sup>

While most displaced families are able to obtain new or replacement civil documents, displaced families with perceived ties to IS either face long delays or, more commonly, are completely blocked from doing so by the

---

66 See “Civil Documentation” for more details on this issue.

67 Interview with social worker for international humanitarian organization on 26 January 2018.

68 Interview with staff member of international humanitarian organization on 27 January 2018.

69 Information from, for example, interviews with “Zeinab” on 20 January 2018, “Samar” on 20 January 2018 and “Israa” on 28 January 2018.

70 Interview with “Maha” (real name withheld) on 21 January 2018.

71 See Minority Rights Group International, *Humanitarian challenges in Iraq’s displacement crisis*, December 2016, [www.minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/MRG-report-A4\\_english-DECEMBER-2016\\_WEB-2.pdf](http://www.minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/MRG-report-A4_english-DECEMBER-2016_WEB-2.pdf)

72 According to a staff member of an international humanitarian organization, members of camp administrations sometimes seize civil documents during the transfer of displaced persons between camps, or from one sector of a camp to another. According to this staff member, many humanitarians fear that these practices will only increase in frequency during upcoming efforts to consolidate and close IDP camps. Skype interview on 25 March 2018.

Iraqi security forces or local authorities.<sup>73</sup> According to NGO workers and lawyers working on civil documentation cases, Iraqis applying for an identity card must first submit an application to their local Civil Status Directorate, where they are subjected to a background check by intelligence and security forces. If one of the family's relatives appears on one of the various "wanted lists" compiled by the Iraqi security forces, the application will very likely be denied.<sup>74</sup>

Families with perceived IS ties who request new or replacement welfare cards, passports, and certificates of birth, death or marriage face similar barriers and obstacles.<sup>75</sup> An international humanitarian worker whose organization provides assistance to families with their legal documentation told Amnesty International:

*It takes a regular IDP family two to four weeks to get new documents, and to close the case... When it's an "IS family", the documents may never be reissued. They are invited to the courts just like other families, but then they face some kind of obstacle. There will be a spelling mistake, or they will be missing some essential information. For other families, they don't care about these things, but for an "IS family", it means that issuing their documents is delayed, often indefinitely... The authorities will have no problem saying "no" to these families.<sup>76</sup>*

Families with perceived IS ties often do not even attempt to obtain new or replacement identity cards or other documents, as many fear they would be arrested or further stigmatized in the process. Others are unable or unwilling to return to their local Civil Service Directorate office, which may be located in an area where their communities will not allow them to return.<sup>77</sup>

Further exacerbating the problem of access to civil documentation for families with IS ties, lawyers have received routine harassment and threats for taking on their cases. According to lawyers and staff members of humanitarian organizations, these threats have come primarily from security actors present in Civil Status Directorate offices and in courts.<sup>78</sup> An international aid worker explained: "When we started doing legal representation, our lawyers would get abused and harassed. They would be told that, by doing this, they themselves were IS supporters... After being harassed, many decide it's not worth it. We have had lawyers quit with 20 open cases after getting threats."<sup>79</sup> An Iraqi lawyer told Amnesty International that, if he arrived at a Civil Status Directorate office to file a request for a family with perceived IS ties, "[staff members'] faces would change, and they would say, 'What, you are working for the 'IS families?'"<sup>80</sup> An international aid worker added: "Lawyers are being told, 'Don't come to the court with this kind of case again.'" She also noted that some Civil Status Directorate offices have put a limit on the number of cases that certain NGOs can file each month. This has meant that these NGOs deprioritize requests from families with perceived IS ties, as they know their chances of success with these requests are slim to none.<sup>81</sup>

As one international aid worker put it, for Iraqis, "your documentation papers are your lifeline".<sup>82</sup> Life without civil documents, both inside and outside of the IDP camps, is extremely difficult. For instance, if children are unable to attain birth certificates, they may be considered stateless and will often be unable to enrol in school.<sup>83</sup> Iraqis without identity cards are also often unable to secure employment, both inside and outside IDP camps.<sup>84</sup> As "Hanan" explained: "My daughter didn't have her identity card, so they wouldn't hire her for any job... None of the 'IS families' has an identity card, so we don't have the same opportunities for work as the people in the rest of the camp."<sup>85</sup> This leaves female-headed families with perceived ties to IS – many of whom have been shunned by their communities and have no access to financial assistance from outside

---

73 While the research for this report focused on families living in IDP camps, families with perceived IS affiliation based outside of IDP camps are facing similar obstacles. See Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Families of alleged ISIS members denied IDs", 25 February 2018, [www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/25/iraq-families-alleged-isis-members-denied-ids](http://www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/25/iraq-families-alleged-isis-members-denied-ids)

74 See "Scale and Patterns of Enforced Disappearance" for more details on how these lists are compiled.

75 Interviews with staff members of international humanitarian organizations on 27 January 2018, 13 February 2018, 22 February 2018 and 27 February 2018.

76 Interview with staff members of international humanitarian organization on 27 January 2018.

77 For example, "Zeinab", a member of a female-headed household, said: "I lost my ID during the battle, when I was running away. If you issue a new ID, you have to start from al-Za'ab [a town in Hawija district, Kirkuk governorate]. The community rejected us there – we can't go. So it's impossible to get a new ID for us." Interview on 20 January 2018. For more details on blocks to return, see Section 6.1.

78 Interviews with staff members of international humanitarian organizations on 23 and 27 January 2018 and on 11 and 13 February 2018. For more details, see International Rescue Committee, "Born under ISIS, the children struggling in Iraq", 19 January 2018, [www.reliefweb.int/report/iraq/born-under-isis-children-struggling-iraq](http://www.reliefweb.int/report/iraq/born-under-isis-children-struggling-iraq)

79 Interview with staff member of international humanitarian organization on 27 January 2018.

80 Skype interview with Iraqi lawyer working with international humanitarian organization on 22 February 2018.

81 Skype interview with staff member of international humanitarian organization on 11 February 2018.

82 Interview with staff member of international humanitarian organization on 27 January 2018.

83 "Children of Caliphate face stateless future", Reuters, 15 November 2016, [www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-mosul-children/iraqs-children-of-caliphate-face-stateless-future-idUSKBN13A17F](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-mosul-children/iraqs-children-of-caliphate-face-stateless-future-idUSKBN13A17F); "Iraq's generation of stateless Isis children is being 'punished for the crimes of their fathers'", *The Independent*, 18 May 2017, [www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-mosul-children-iraq-legal-system-stateless-school-aid-fighter-fathers-crime-a7742751.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-mosul-children-iraq-legal-system-stateless-school-aid-fighter-fathers-crime-a7742751.html)

84 See Minority Rights Group International, *Humanitarian challenges in Iraq's displacement crisis*, December 2016, [www.minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/MRG-report-A4\\_english-DECEMBER-2016\\_WEB-2.pdf](http://www.minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/MRG-report-A4_english-DECEMBER-2016_WEB-2.pdf)

85 Interview with "Hanan" (real name withheld) on 12 December 2017.

of the camp – in an especially difficult situation. A single woman without a death certificate for her husband is also unable to remarry, inherit her husband’s property or collect his pension.<sup>86</sup> Finally, as discussed in “5.3 Freedom of Movement”, families without identity cards face severe restrictions on their movement, as they are often not allowed to cross through checkpoints or even leave the camp.

## 5.3 FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

*“Take our voices out there with you when you leave the fence. Tell them we are prisoners here.”*

“Widad”, member of female-headed household in al-Shahama camp<sup>87</sup>

Families with perceived ties to IS living in IDP camps face severe restrictions on their movement. Some women and children are held in de facto detention in IDP camps; some are prevented from leaving by camp authorities; and others are unable to cross through checkpoints outside of the camps, either because they do not have their identity cards or fear they will be arrested.

### 5.3.1 AL-SHAHAMA CAMP

Al-Shahama camp, located near Tikrit in Salah al-Din governorate, is comprised of families who have been told by security forces or members of the camp administration that they have been sent to the camp because their relatives were involved with IS.<sup>88</sup> Women in the camp told Amnesty International that they have not been accused of or investigated for wrongdoing themselves, yet they have been forbidden from leaving. Al-Shahama camp is therefore operating as a de facto detention centre.

When Amnesty International researchers visited al-Shahama camp on two occasions in January 2018, staff members of humanitarian organizations operating in the camp reported that 180 families were held there.<sup>89</sup> Displaced persons in al-Shahama camp are allowed to leave the premises of the camp only if they receive special approval from the camp director to seek medical care at a nearby hospital.<sup>90</sup> In this case, camp residents usually travel in a group of between 10 and 15 people and are escorted by a police officer.<sup>91</sup> Families in al-Shahama camp are also not allowed to have mobile phones. Instead, their phones are kept at the headquarters of the camp administration at the front gate. They are allowed to use them, in the presence of security forces and camp authorities, for one hour twice a week.<sup>92</sup>

Families interviewed at al-Shahama camp said that they had been sent to the camp by Iraqi forces, such as the PMU, who were present in their communities or by Iraqi security forces at the *Aqwas* [Arches] Checkpoint in Tikrit.<sup>93</sup> According to social workers and aid workers in the camp, “release” from the camp is only possible if a family successfully passes a series of checks conducted by Iraqi security forces, by tribal and local authorities in their places of origin and, finally, by the Commander of the Salah al-Din Operations Command, which co-ordinates the various security forces in the governorate. Securing all of these approvals can take as long as 18 months, if it happens at all.<sup>94</sup> “Wafa” described her struggle to get the necessary approvals to leave al-Shahama camp:

*Because we are in a prison, we need to get approval in order to be released. The manager came to me and showed me a message he had got about me. It said, “She will never get out of the camp.” The message was sent by some people who own property in my village. They are trusted because they are rich, and the security services depend on them to say who is affiliated with IS and who is*

---

86 For more details, see Human Rights Watch, “Iraq: Families of alleged ISIS members denied IDs”, 25 February 2018, [www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/25/iraq-families-alleged-isis-members-denied-ids](http://www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/25/iraq-families-alleged-isis-members-denied-ids)

87 Interview with “Widad” (real name withheld) on 28 January 2018.

88 Amnesty International understands that al-Shahama camp is unique in Iraq in that it is comprised entirely of families with perceived IS ties. In the majority of IDP camps in Iraq, families with perceived IS ties are either grouped together in one area of the camp or scattered throughout it.

89 Camp authorities did not disclose the number of individuals held at al-Shahama camp to the staff members of local or international humanitarian organizations present in the camp.

90 This was consistently reported in interviews with camp residents on 16 and 28 January 2018.

91 Interviews with staff members of national and international humanitarian organizations based at al-Shahama camp on 17 and 28 January 2018.

92 Interviews with staff members of national and international humanitarian organizations based at al-Shahama camp on 17 and 28 January 2018.

93 This checkpoint is located on the main highway connecting Mosul to Tikrit, and it serves as one of the primary entrances to Tikrit.

94 Interviews with staff members of national and international humanitarian organizations based at al-Shahama camp on 17 and 28 January 2018.



*not... We are a very depressed community [in al-Shahama camp]. This camp is like hell. I just want to get out of this camp... This is not a solution – you can't keep us here.*<sup>95</sup>

Several women at al-Shahama camp shared with Amnesty International their feelings of isolation and rejection. According to “Widad”: “Since we arrived here nobody has asked us if we are alive or dead. No NGOs have asked us why we are here, why we are alone.”<sup>96</sup> “Mariam” added: “We see almost no internationals here. When you come here, we feel much better, because it makes us feel we are still accepted, and we might someday be acceptable to our community.”<sup>97</sup> The women interviewed said that their isolation was aggravated by the fact that their relatives either could not visit them, because they feared they would be arrested and sent to al-Shahama camp themselves, or refused to visit them, because it would stigmatize them as being associated with an “IS family”.

“Lina” expressed a typical sentiment about her confinement in al-Shahama camp:

*Someone told us this camp was established to punish “IS families”. Someone else told us the camp was established to protect “IS families”. Maybe there is a small element of protection, but mostly this camp was established to punish us. How is this protection? And why are we kept here, when so many families with IS relatives are in other camps and outside the camps? ... Why was this camp created? Because our hypocritical communities wanted to punish us and teach us a lesson.*<sup>98</sup>

### 5.3.2 OTHER IDP CAMPS

Although the other camps visited by Amnesty International researchers do not officially place the same type of restrictions on residents’ movements, many families with perceived ties to IS in these camps also face severe restrictions on their freedom of movement. One of the primary causes of this is that they do not have their identity cards, for the reasons detailed above, in “5.2 Civil Documentation”. Without identity cards, families can be blocked from leaving the camp, and they are likely to be either sent back from or even arrested at checkpoints.<sup>99</sup> According to a lawyer working with families with perceived IS ties: “These families without identity cards are living in de facto detention in the camps.”<sup>100</sup> A staff member of an international humanitarian organization added:

*The fact that a lot of families don't have documentation is a root cause of their vulnerability now – and a reason why they don't want to leave the camps. People are told they can leave, but if they are going to be detained at the first checkpoint, then is this really freedom of movement? Also many people are getting turned back at the checkpoints. This will happen more and more as people are encouraged to leave the camps.*<sup>101</sup>

“Anhar” described her family’s situation:

*We applied for new documentation, but the camp authorities said that they need to get an order from someone with a high rank to allow families like us to leave the camp, so we are waiting for their decision. The Iraqi National Security Service checked our documentation, and they refused to let us leave the camp because we are an “IS family”. They told us we have a file there [at the police office in our village], with our photos. We are afraid they will never allow us to leave.*<sup>102</sup>

“Maha” explained that she needed to go to a hospital outside the camp to obtain medical care for her son, but that she was unable to cross through checkpoints without her identity card: “If I want to get the operation for my son, it’s not possible, because I have no ID and I can’t get through the checkpoints. It’s like I’m caught in a spider’s web.”<sup>103</sup>

Several women with perceived IS ties residing in different camps reported that the camp authorities or security forces present at the camp confiscated their identity cards after they arrived there, which means that they are now unable to leave the camp. For instance, “Hanin” told Amnesty International:

---

95 Interview with “Wafa” (real name withheld) on 28 January 2018.

96 Interview with “Widad” (real name withheld) on 28 January 2018.

97 Interview with “Mariam” (real name withheld) on 28 January 2018.

98 Interview with “Lina” (real name withheld) on 18 January 2018.

99 This was consistently reported in interviews conducted with female-headed households as well as with staff members of international humanitarian organizations in December 2017 and January 2018.

100 Skype interview with Iraqi lawyer working with an international humanitarian organization on 22 February 2018.

101 Skype interview with staff member of international humanitarian organization on 11 February 2018.

102 Interview with “Anhar” (real name withheld) on 14 December 2018.

103 Interview with “Maha” (real name withheld) on 24 January 2018.

*After we arrived in July 2017, the security forces [at the camp] investigated us and took our IDs. Somebody from [our village] works in the intelligence, so they want to punish us... So we can't go outside of the camp now... I didn't like the camp at first – I thought it looked like a jail. Since they took our documents, I know it really is a jail.*<sup>104</sup>

Finally, some women told Amnesty International that they could not leave the camp after receiving threats from relatives living outside. For instance, “Amani” said, “I received a message from the relatives of my husband through one of the security guards – they said they will erase my family. They said I should never leave the camp and, if I did, they would kill us.”<sup>105</sup>

## 5.4 HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION

*“We cannot be alone outside the camp – it's not safe for us. But really it's the same inside the camp. Nowhere is safe.”*

“Dana”, member of female-headed household at Qayyara Airstrip Camp<sup>106</sup>

Several women with perceived ties to IS reported being harassed due to their alleged affiliation by security forces present at the camp, camp authorities, staff members of humanitarian aid organizations and other camp residents. The forms of harassment described by the women interviewed for this report included general verbal harassment, sexual harassment and other forms of intimidation and abuse.

Many women told Amnesty International that they faced routine verbal harassment in the camp.<sup>107</sup> Women also said that their children had been targeted specifically for verbal harassment. “Maha” shared a typical account: “Yesterday, my son was playing with the other children, and an older woman started swearing at him. She said, ‘Your mother is IS, your father is IS and you are IS.’ What can I do when she says this? Nothing.”<sup>108</sup> “Manal”, a 45-year-old woman, added: “The children here are taunted all the time – by other children and their parents. Children will never forget seeing their families humiliated.”<sup>109</sup>

Some women interviewed for this report also reported that relatives, members of the community or armed actors had approached the entrance of the camp to threaten or sexually harass them. For instance, “Lina” said: “I have been living here for more than one year. At the beginning, the *Hashd* [PMU] kept trying to come in. They would circle the camp and yell at us: ‘You are all IS fighters – all of you.’ There was one officer at the gate who protected us. But without him, what would have happened?”<sup>110</sup> “Nahla” told Amnesty International:

*The police on the other side of the fence are always shouting things at us. They slash the tarpaulin [covering the fence] to look at us. We tell [an NGO in the camp] and they come and silently patch it up without speaking to them. At night, they slash it again and then we have to tell [the NGO]. They are scared to speak to them. Sometimes we see [the police] take photos... At night they shout things like “Why won't you come to me? I am so lonely here.”*<sup>111</sup>

Several women with perceived IS ties reported being sexually harassed by medical workers and humanitarian aid workers. “Maha” said: “I visited a doctor in a private clinic here in the camp, and he started to tell me all about my lips and my body. He said it wasn't fair for someone so beautiful to be with IS. He was talking about me as if I was an object. I couldn't say anything in response.”<sup>112</sup> “Nour” described how she and other women with perceived IS ties were treated during an aid distribution: “Once, when they were giving our mattresses, the men [from a national NGO] said to us, ‘Say you love me and I'll give you a mattress’... One of them said, ‘Give me your phone number and you can have as many [mattresses] as you want.’”<sup>113</sup>

---

104 Interview with “Hanin” (real name withheld) on 23 January 2018.

105 Interview with “Amani” (real name withheld) on 25 January 2018.

106 Interview with “Dana” (real name withheld) on 24 January 2018.

107 This was consistently reported in interviews conducted with female-headed households in IDP camps in December 2017 and January 2018.

108 Interview with “Maha” (real name withheld) on 24 January 2018.

109 Interview with “Manal” (real name withheld) on 12 December 2017.

110 Interview with “Lina” (real name withheld) on 26 January 2018.

111 Interview with “Nahla” (real name withheld) on 10 December 2017.

112 Interview with “Maha” (real name withheld) on 24 January 2018.

113 Interview with “Nour” (real name withheld) on 26 January 2018.

Due to this harassment, as well as the sexual violence and sexual exploitation outlined below, many women reported that they felt extremely unsafe in the camps. For instance, “Anhar” told Amnesty International:

*My daughter is an “IS widow”, and she just moved from her own tent into this tent, because it is safer if we are all together. I am so worried about her. We are all widows here... They are coming after us. Because we are alone here, and not connected to anyone, the other people in the camp harass us. After the sun sets, we cannot leave the tent. After dark, we close our doors and stay inside. We use a plastic container if we need to go to the bathroom, and we put diapers on the smaller children.<sup>114</sup>*

When asked whether she felt safe in the camp, “Dana” responded: “I am like a deer living in a jungle now, with the tigers and the lions surrounding me.”<sup>115</sup>

## 5.5 RAPE AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

*“Every night I go to bed afraid. Every morning I wake up still afraid of what might happen the next day.”*

“Wafa”, member of female-headed household<sup>116</sup>

Women with perceived ties to IS in IDP camps, among other women from female-headed households, have been subjected to sexual violence, including rape and sexual exploitation. The primary perpetrators of these violations are armed actors working in and nearby the camps, such as security guards, military and militia personnel, who use their positions of authority to take advantage of these women’s poverty and isolation.

### 5.5.1 RAPE AND ATTEMPTED RAPE

According to the women interviewed for this report, as well as staff members of national and international humanitarian organizations, women in IDP camps who are members of female-headed households have been subjected to sexual violence including rape, while others have been threatened with rape. Women with perceived IS ties appear to be at particular risk given their relative isolation from other families and their own relatives as well as armed actors’ and other men’s desire to punish these women for their alleged affiliation.

In the course of the research for this report, four women told Amnesty International that they had either witnessed rape directly, by being present when the rape occurred, or heard the screams of a woman in a nearby tent who was being raped by armed actors, members of the camp administration or other camp residents. One of these women, “Fatima”, shared her experience:

*In November [2017], [the security forces present in the camp] came and took me and another woman called “Rusul” [real name withheld] to the tent by the gate. There was a woman who stripped and searched us. She even took out our hair grips. She grabbed everything. Then we saw her hug all the men in turn and laugh and leave. They kept us there until 11pm and [one of the members of the security forces] came and swore at us. Then [one of the men] raped “Rusul”. She was fighting him and punching him, but it happened.<sup>117</sup>*

Women with perceived IS ties also told Amnesty International that they or their families had survived attempts by armed actors in the camp, camp authorities or camp residents to rape them. “Dana” shared her experience:

*Some people came to my tent in a white car, and they said they needed to do an investigation with me in the offices. They were from the PMU... They came twice, in the same day – during the day and at midnight. I refused to go with them, and I went and I slept in my neighbours’ tent. They threatened my neighbours, and they said, “If you allow her to sleep here again, we will punish you.” Because they consider me the same as an IS fighter, they will rape me and send me back. They want to show everyone what they can do to me – to take away my honour... I informed the*

---

114 Interview with “Anhar” (real name withheld) on 14 December 2017.

115 Interview with “Dana” (real name withheld) on 26 January 2018.

116 Interview with “Wafa” (real name withheld) on 17 January 2018.

117 Interview with “Fatima” (real name withheld) on 26 January 2018.

security forces at the camp, and they took away [the PMU members'] weapons and beat them, but they released them the same day.

*Just yesterday, [two camp residents] came to the tent, and they tried to come in. They said I had to have sex with them. I refused. I didn't know them, and I didn't have any idea who they were. I tried to spend the night with my sister-in-law last night, but she refused. We are from different tribes... I can't feel comfortable in my tent. I just want a door to lock and walls around me at night. I am so scared every night. I am OK during the day, but each night I say to myself, "Tonight is the night I'm going to die."<sup>118</sup>*

"Riman", a 20-year-old woman, witnessed the torture of her sister-in-law and survived an attempted rape at the headquarters of the security forces in her camp. She told Amnesty International:

*In November 2017, the security forces came to the tent around 8pm. There were three of them, and they took my sister-in-law and me to the camp administration office by car. They tried to rape us. When we refused, they tied my sister-in-law's arms and used the electricity cables on her. They had separated us, and they were going to rape me. But then [a member of the PMU] came in and told them that my father had worked as a chief of the local police in my village. After that they let us go back to the tent. It was later that night, around 11pm. We didn't have our shoes – they had taken them. We walked back to the tent, and we found they had taken it. It was gone. None of our neighbours would take us in. They were scared about what would happen to them if they did. We had to huddle by the generator until the morning.<sup>119</sup>*

Several women discussed their fear of "raids" or "investigations" by security forces or camp authorities, as they feared such raids could lead to sexual violence. "Sema", a 41-year-old woman, explained: "We don't feel safe here, not at all. Three days ago a policeman came at night. He said he was doing an 'inventory' of the tent. He was alone. He said he was visiting all of the tents, but we found out later he only came to our tent and the one next door. Now, we are feeling very scared."<sup>120</sup>

According to "Wafa":

*There was a raid by the PMU and Federal Police on 31 December [2017]... They came in the early morning, when it was still dark. I went into the tent across from mine, and one of the men came in. I turned on the light, and he said, "No, the dark is better for us. There is a beautiful smell in this tent, but I think your body smells even better." He approached me, but I just ran towards the door, and tried to get outside. I managed to get out. They can check the tents in the day, but, if they come at night, we are very afraid.<sup>121</sup>*

"Tasmin", a 42-year-old woman, also shared her experience of the raids in her camp:

*There are many raids by the PMU. The camp manager told us, "I am the one who protects you. If I just say the word, all of the Hashd [PMU] fighters will come into the camp and rape you." It sounds like he wants to protect us, but actually this is a threat. In the first raid, 50 families arrived at the camp, and they came into all the tents. They said they wanted to arrest any women who were working with the Hesba [religious police]... They came in the middle of the night... I am very scared that my daughters or I will be raped during one of these raids. The Colonel [of the security forces present inside the camp] came into my tent the other day, asking about my daughters. I felt so scared for them. Here, the women have to protect themselves. If you see a guard, or a camp manager – you don't smile, you don't laugh. You don't let him think about anything sexual. This is what we have to do to stay safe.<sup>122</sup>*

## 5.5.2 SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Amnesty International researchers established that sexual exploitation was occurring at every camp visited for this report.<sup>123</sup> The practice was confirmed and described in detail by 26 international NGO workers, national NGO workers and current and former UN officials and 19 women members of female-headed

---

118 Interview with "Fatima" (real name withheld) on 26 January 2018.

119 Interview with "Riman" (real name withheld) on 26 January 2018.

120 Interview with "Sema" (real name withheld) on 14 December 2017.

121 Interview with "Wafa" (real name withheld) on 17 January 2018.

122 Interview with "Tasmin" (real name withheld) on 28 January 2018.

123 The sexual exploitation of women with perceived ties to IS in IDP camps in Iraq was first established publicly as a serious concern in October 2017. See Refugees International, *Guilt by association: Iraqi women detained and subject to sexual exploitation and abuse*, October 2017, [www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2017/10/iraq](http://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2017/10/iraq)

households. Nine of these women told Amnesty International they had personally been subjected to coercion or pressure to enter into exploitative sexual relationships with men. According to these sources, the perpetrators are primarily armed actors working in and near the camps, such as security guards, military and militia personnel. They also reported the involvement of other camp authorities – including members of the camp administration and those providing aid – as well as of other camp residents. These sources reported that the sexual exploitation occurred in the women’s own tents, in the buildings of the camp authorities, in the homes of men living in nearby villages or in certain areas near the camps. While all women from female-headed households are at significant risk of sexual exploitation, women with perceived IS ties are at even greater risk for several reasons, which are outlined below.

## ABUSE OF POWER

According to NGO workers and the women interviewed for this report, armed actors, members of camp authorities and others are using their positions of power to coerce and pressure women into sexual relationships by promising cash, humanitarian aid or preference in aid distributions, protection from other armed actors or men in the camp, the release of family members from detention or permission to leave the camp without undergoing the usual procedures. As described in other chapters of this report, these actors have significant control over several facets of life for women with perceived IS ties, including their access to humanitarian aid and health care, freedom of movement and general safety in the camp.

“Tala”, a 28-year-old woman, said that she was pressured into having sexual relations with members of the PMU in her camp because they had the authority to allow her to leave the camp. She told Amnesty International:

*I had six extra children with me, because their mother was arrested in Tikrit for being with IS, and I had to take care of them. I was forced to start sleeping with members of the PMU, because I needed every dinar I could get. They kept coming to my tent, to talk with me, and to offer to give me money to sleep with them. Finally I accepted. I needed to get out of the camp to get food, and I had no permission to do that, but they gave me the permission. By the end I had relationships with more than 15 men. They would come in the middle of the night, and I would sleep with them inside the tent, while my children were sleeping. They gave me the permission to leave the camp, and they gave me money too. They would give me 60,000 or 70,000 dinars [the equivalent of US\$50 or 58], sometimes even up to 100,000 dinars [US\$84].*

*They said they were all in the PMU... That helped me to trust them, because all of the camp was under the control of the PMU... I don't know their positions, but they were usually at the gate [of the camp]... I started doing this in the first month I arrived, and I did it for all of the nine months I was there. Many women were doing this. I know 15 other women personally who were doing this in [the camp]. There was one woman who was making arrangements for all of the women, but I did it independently from her.<sup>124</sup>*

“Riman” told Amnesty International that women in her camp were having sex with members of the PMU in exchange for the release of their relatives from detention. She explained: “The ‘IS wives’ are doing this... [They] sometimes do this to get them to release their husbands or their brothers. ‘Hadiya’s’ [real name withheld] husband and brother are detained in Qayyara, so this is why she does this.”<sup>125</sup>

“Dana” told Amnesty that the women in her camp usually received monetary compensation in exchange for engaging in sexual relations. “At least half of the women in my section are doing this,” she said. “After they have sex, they are given 15,000, 30,000, 50,000 Iraqi dinars [the equivalent of US\$13, 25 and 42]. It’s a lot of money in the camp. Sometimes the woman herself determines the cost; sometimes it is fixed by the [armed actor].”<sup>126</sup>

Several women interviewed by Amnesty International said that they faced repercussions if they did not agree to enter into sexual relationships. For instance, “Amani” said:

*When my son got sick, I was trying to get some medicine for him. The clinic gave me only two pills, so I decided I should go to the doctor in Qayyara. I asked the mukhtar [leader of the camp section] to work – to get any work – to improve this situation. He asked, “Do you want to marry me?” I said no. I refused. Then he asked me whether I wanted to have sex with him. He said if I did, he would look out for me. I refused, and he was really angry. He is responsible for distribution in the section.*

---

124 Interview with “Tala” (real name withheld) on 16 January 2018.

125 Interview with “Riman” (real name withheld) on 26 January 2018.

126 Interview with “Dana” (real name withheld) on 26 January 2018.

*Now I don't talk with him any more. Just last week, they distributed clothes, and he put my name at the end of the list. I had to stand in the rain for hours.*<sup>127</sup>

## RISK FACTORS FOR WOMEN WITH PERCEIVED TIES TO IS

According to NGO workers, camp residents and the women interviewed for this report, women with perceived IS ties are at heightened risk of sexual exploitation. These sources cited three primary reasons for this. First, these women were seen as outcasts and therefore were most in need of protection from other men, whether outside or inside the camp. An international protection actor explained: “These women are isolated, and cut off from the rest of the camp. They don't have a voice to demand anything... There is no one to help them, and no expertise to support them. They are not perceived to be human beings.”<sup>128</sup> “Maha”, a woman who had been pressured to enter into sexual relationships with several men, added: “The ‘IS widows’ do this because we need the protection – we have no brothers or husbands to protect us... I am a widow, and I am an ‘IS widow’, so I have no protection... We are powerless. They just look at us as sexual objects.”<sup>129</sup>

Second, as outlined in “5.1 Access to Food, Water and Health Care”, many women with perceived ties to IS live in extreme poverty, as they rarely receive financial or other assistance from relatives and often face restrictions on their access to humanitarian aid. They are therefore more vulnerable to being coerced or pressured to have sex in order to obtain adequate food, water, other humanitarian aid and health care. “Amani” summarized the situation: “‘IS widows’ [in my camp] are forced to do this, because they don't get enough aid. When I see this or hear about it, I feel really scared about my own situation.”<sup>130</sup> A social worker for an international humanitarian organization added: “Poverty and desperation are the reasons behind so many problems here. The problems, like sexual exploitation, come because the women and the children have basic needs that are not met.”<sup>131</sup>

“Wafa” told Amnesty International her fear that if she did not enter into a “special relationship” – the phrase she and several other women used to describe sexual exploitation – she would not have enough food to feed her family. She explained:

*Now I thank God that I don't have to have the special relationships like many other women in the camp. I'm not sure about the coming days, though. We had to sell half of our dry goods yesterday to buy vegetables. That will just last us a few weeks. What about the end of the month? What will I do then? I spoke with a friend who told me her secret: she was giving herself to a man who would give her soap and 5,000 Iraqi dinars [the equivalent of US\$4] each time. She didn't have anything... I am just afraid that I will end up in my friend's situation. I am worried that I will be forced to have sex with a man to get enough to eat.*<sup>132</sup>

“Zeinab” added: “The women who have special relationships in the camp receive the items without having to get in line. They came and got the items straight away... They get the distributions first from all of the organizations. They just wave these women forward. I am starving instead of having these relationships.”<sup>133</sup>

Third, women with perceived ties to IS are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation because their alleged affiliation motivates men to degrade and punish them – and by extension, their families and IS itself. According to an international humanitarian worker: “The ‘men in uniform’ will never let these women go. Any chance to ‘correct’ them – to dehumanize them – they will take. And using them for sex is the best way to correct them.”<sup>134</sup> According to “Amani”:

*It's not just that the “IS widows” need the money. The men are doing this to take revenge on us, because they think we are IS. There was one woman... one of the security force members had sex with her. She was with him in front of everyone. He said he would marry her. But then he said, “That's enough – I took what I wanted from you.” He left her. She had to flee the camp after that.*<sup>135</sup>

“Dana” shared her experience: “Everyone is coming to my tent [for sex]. In the beginning, the security forces came. After that, the other camp residents came and started to bother me. There are two reasons they do

---

127 Interview with “Amani” (real name withheld) on 25 January 2018.

128 Interview with staff member of international humanitarian organization on 13 December 2017.

129 Interview with “Maha” (real name withheld) on 24 January 2018.

130 Interview with “Amani” (real name withheld) on 25 January 2018.

131 Interview with social worker for international humanitarian organization on 12 December 2017.

132 Interview with “Wafa” (real name withheld) on 17 January 2018.

133 Interview with “Zeinab” (real name withheld) on 20 January 2018.

134 Interview with staff member of international humanitarian organization on 13 December 2017.

135 Interview with “Amani” (real name withheld) on 25 January 2018.

this: first, they say I'm from an 'IS family'. Second, they say that I'm with IS, so they want to punish me, and take their revenge."<sup>136</sup>

## SYSTEMS OF EXPLOITATION

Interviewees described a complex system of exploitation, which varied from camp to camp. Some women reported that armed actors and other men would approach their tents directly to pressure them for sex. For instance, according to "Rania":

*Most of us in [my section of the camp] were "IS widows". They put us in an annex, in a special area. I saw horrible things there... Men – the other camp residents, or the management – would come to this area. They were wearing normal clothes, not military uniforms... There were women doing this [having sex with the men] – many of the women... I slept inside the tent, even though it was so hot. The families with young children or old women had to stay outside... The men would come around three times a week. They would roam around our area, looking for single women. It was a terrifying situation.<sup>137</sup>*

Other women told Amnesty International that sexual relationships were arranged by armed actors, members of the camp administration or others who acted as "pimps" or "madams". These individuals – referred to in Arabic as *simsar* or *simsara*, respectively – were said to be acting at the behest of armed actors or camp authorities. These individuals would arrange introductions and coerce and pressure women to enter into sexual relationships with men. "Fatima" described her relationship with the "madam" in her camp: "There is a woman here... [She] is torturing us... She wants me to sleep with the security men... She has been harassing and threatening me for two months now."<sup>138</sup> "Dana" described the situation in her camp:

*There are definitely pimps, or people who are organizing this. For example, an officer might ask a soldier to prepare him a dinner and to bring a certain woman from a certain tent. The soldier will go and prepare everything. After they meet [to have sexual relations], she is paid her money and sent back to her tent. There are also madams in the camps. They will invite the women to go outside of the tent. The woman [madam] won't usually force the person to do the sex work, but, if she refuses, then the security forces will come to her at night and force her to do it. If any single woman wants to get married to someone – if she starts seeing a man, so that they might get married – the security forces will be informed. They will then attack the man or the woman, or both of them together. They need a bigger pool of women to do the sex work, so they don't allow this kind of normal dating.<sup>139</sup>*

"Riman" confirmed that she was visited by a member of the security forces after she refused the pressure of one of the women in the camp:

*There are a lot of pimps and madams in this camp. The security forces sent [one of these madams] to my tent, and asked me to do this work. I said, "No... I don't want to do this." She was coming very often, but finally she stopped. Then one of the security officers came and said to me, "If you refuse to have sex with me, I will kick you out of the camp."<sup>140</sup>*

## RISKS FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH

Because sexual exploitation is so widespread in the camps, humanitarian workers are now concerned that sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions will emerge as the next challenges in the IDP camps. An international aid worker told Amnesty International: "I am concerned about these women's reproductive health. The men are forcing them into sex, and there is no plan in place to prevent sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy... The issues will keep evolving. In the spring, we will be talking about self-induced abortion."<sup>141</sup> These fears were shared by the victims of sexual exploitation. "Tala" told Amnesty International that she needed to have three abortions after engaging in multiple relationships with men:

*I got pregnant three times in nine months... [One of the men who pressured me into sex] gave me drugs for an abortion. He gave me a vial of something yellow, and then they injected it into me at*

---

136 Interview with "Dana" (real name withheld) on 26 January 2018.

137 Interview with "Rania" (real name withheld) on 21 January 2018.

138 Interview with "Fatima" (real name withheld) on 26 January 2018.

139 Interview with "Dana" (real name withheld) on 25 January 2018.

140 Interview with "Riman" (real name withheld) on 26 January 2018.

141 Interview with staff member of international humanitarian organization on 13 December 2017.

*the health centre. I told the doctor it was a multivitamin that I had been given. All of the women who I know who were doing this work also became pregnant and then took the same drugs to get rid of the pregnancy. All of us were doing this. We would all do it in the first or second month of the pregnancy.*<sup>142</sup>

She also shared her concerns about her health: “I’m not feeling sick, but I’m afraid I might have some infections... They don’t have any specialist here [at the camp], so they can’t check me. I need to go to a specialist.”<sup>143</sup>

### 5.5.3 NOWHERE TO TURN

Women targeted for sexual violence, including rape and sexual exploitation, are often unable to take action to end these abuses. Several obstacles prevent victims, other camp residents and humanitarian organizations from reporting incidents and threats of sexual violence. Perhaps most importantly, Iraqi women subjected to sexual violence can be stigmatized by their families, other camp residents or camp authorities, who may blame the women for the treatment they have received. Women who complain about sexual violence and exploitation are also at risk of being penalized by camp authorities or others in positions of power in the camp, who are able to withhold aid, restrict their movement, confiscate their documents or even subject them to more intense sexual violence after receiving complaints. Several women told Amnesty International that, after complaining members of the camp administration about their treatment, they had faced retribution or punishment. As “Israa” explained:

*[Sexual] exploitation is happening. Actually we are scared to talk about this. Some of the [humanitarian] organizations said the “IS widows” were complaining about being harassed here. After that, [members of the camp administration] started taking the women for “investigations” in the administration offices as a punishment... After one woman complained [to the camp authorities], we have got more harassment, and more bad treatment.*<sup>144</sup>

“Israa” also said that, as a result of complaints about sexual exploitation in her camp, the camp authorities had allowed a man to enter her camp at night. “[Last night] a drunk man was moving around the camp in the middle of the night. We heard a woman screaming in the night – it was from a tent nearby, where a single woman is living... What happened last night is a message to us: we have no options here,” she said.<sup>145</sup>

Social workers and other staff members of humanitarian organizations also face challenges in sounding the alarm. Those who have tried to address the problem or intervened in particular cases have been threatened by camp authorities or armed actors in the camp, denied access to the camps and stigmatized as supporters of IS.<sup>146</sup> Some NGO workers also told Amnesty International that their organizations or staff members felt pressure from international decision-makers involved in responding to the humanitarian crisis in Iraq not to focus on the issue of sexual exploitation in the camps.<sup>147</sup> As one international humanitarian worker explained:

*There is no political will to condemn this... The decision makers, the critical thinkers need to say “this is wrong”. If you are quiet about it, it will continue... Is this actually a safe haven? What are all these [other NGOs] doing? Do they understand that every person has rights? ... We are now covering this issue with a very big, heavy duvet.*<sup>148</sup>

A social worker added: “All of the international workers avoid talking about [sexual exploitation]. This is the situation in this country: any charge against the security forces will go nowhere.”<sup>149</sup>

For the minority of women who do attempt to report incidents or threats of sexual violence, there are few, if any, mechanisms that can effectively address and end their abuse. Women interviewed for this report told Amnesty International they believed it would be useless or even dangerous to approach the police and pursue any complaint about sexual violence through the judicial system in Iraq, which they feared would be

---

142 Interview with “Tala” on 16 January 2018.

143 Interview with “Tala” on 16 January 2018.

144 Interview with “Israa” (real name withheld) on 28 January 2018. It was unclear to Amnesty International whether the “investigations” she referenced involved abuse or mistreatment.

145 Interview with “Israa” (real name withheld) on 28 January 2018.

146 Interviews with staff members of humanitarian organizations on 13 and 15 December 2017 and 16 January 2018.

147 Interviews with staff members of humanitarian organizations on 8 December 2017, 12 December 2017, 13 December 2017, 27 January 2018 and 15 February 2018.

148 Interview with staff member of international humanitarian organization on 13 December 2017.

149 Interview with social worker for international humanitarian organization on 12 December 2017.



biased against them due to their perceived IS ties. “Nour” said that, after receiving pressure to enter into sexual relationships, she went to the court in a nearby village. She told Amnesty International what happened next:

*The judge said I should follow up [with the police]. Before I left the court, a man – he was a stranger – came up to me and said, “Your rights are burned. You have no right to complain. You’ll just get into more trouble. Go back to your tent.” I came back to the camp instead of following up. I was worried about my children. I am worried they’ll burn our tent as we sleep.<sup>150</sup>*

Several complaints and feedback mechanisms have been put in place by UN agencies and humanitarian organizations. The largest complaints mechanism in Iraq is the IDP Information Centre, a hot line operated by the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), which is a mechanism with a broad mandate to receive, record and refer complaints and information requests from displaced persons. The IDP Information Centre refers cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, committed by either humanitarian workers or armed actors, to the Iraq Network for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA Network), which is co-led by the UN Population Fund and the World Food Programme.<sup>151</sup> However, there is currently no centralized body tasked with systematically tracking and monitoring all incidents of sexual violence, including rape and exploitation. Furthermore, none of the women interviewed for this report was aware that they could report incidents of sexual violence to the IDP Information Centre.

Indeed, most of the women interviewed for this report felt that any attempt to register a complaint about sexual violence would be futile. For instance, “Dana”, who had been pressured by several men to enter into sexual relationships with them, told Amnesty International that the humanitarian organization running her camp was unable to effectively address the issue. “You cannot complain about this – you cannot say anything to the international organizations about this. Where should I complain? The [international organization running the camp] can’t do anything. The security forces are the ones involved in it, so who can I go to?” she said.<sup>152</sup> “Maha” added: “We are the weakest people in the camp. If we want to complain – where? How? Even my brother told me, if the security forces rape me, he can’t help me. They are too afraid of the *Hashd* [PMU].”<sup>153</sup> “Fatima” felt that only one actor had the ability to improve the situation. “If the Iraqi government does not say something,” she said, “we will all rot here unless we sell our bodies.”<sup>154</sup>

---

150 Interview with “Nour” (real name withheld) on 26 January 2018.

151 Skype interviews and email exchanges with staff members of UN agencies and humanitarian organizations on 15 February, 15 March, 21 March and 24 March 2018.

152 Interview with “Dana” on 26 January 2018.

153 Interview with “Maha” (real name withheld) on 24 January 2018.

154 Interview with “Fatima” (real name withheld) on 26 January 2018.

# 6. LACK OF OPTIONS, FUTURE RISKS

**“Someone told me: everyone will return home, except for the ‘IS families.’”**

“Amani”, member of female-headed household in Jedaa 1 camp

Many women and children with perceived ties to IS are trapped in IDP camps. This chapter describes how threats and orders from tribal and local authorities, as well as threats from Iraqi forces including the PMU, other government-aligned militias and community members, have prevented them from returning home. It shows how those who have managed to go home have been subjected to forced displacement, evictions, arrests, looting of their homes, house demolitions, threats, sexual abuse and harassment, and discrimination. These abuses have led to a spate of “boomerang returns” and secondary displacement back into the camps. Finally, the chapter addresses how these women and children have few and extremely bleak options for the future, leading some to consider suicide.

## 6.1 BLOCKS TO RETURN

Families with perceived ties to IS have been regularly prevented from returning to their homes or places of origin as a result of threats from their neighbours, tribal and local authorities, Iraqi forces including the PMU or the Tribal Mobilization militias.<sup>155</sup>

“Munifa”, a 60-year-old woman, described the threats that her family was facing: “Our problem is that in our neighbourhood, they don’t accept us. We were told that our tribe won’t allow any ‘IS women’ to return... [The tribe] threatened to kill us – even the children. We are just women and children. We can’t stay at the camps... We need to go back home.”<sup>156</sup>

In several areas, local and tribal authorities have issued orders blocking the return of certain families they perceive to be linked with IS.<sup>157</sup> The details of these orders vary. Many simply bar the return of all women

---

155 These trends were consistently reported in interviews conducted with members of female-headed households in December 2017 and January 2018. They were also mentioned in interviews with members of camp administrations on 12 December 2017, 19 January 2018 and 23 January 2018; social workers for international humanitarian organizations on 15 December 2017 and 25 January 2018; and staff members of international humanitarian organizations on 15 February 2018 and 22 February 2018. For more details, see “Tribal laws determine fate of IS families in Iraq”, *Al-Monitor*, 1 March 2018, [www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/02/ninevah-anbar-salahuddin-iraq.html#ixzz58zVsgFNR](http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/02/ninevah-anbar-salahuddin-iraq.html#ixzz58zVsgFNR); Norwegian Refugee Council, Danish Refugee Council, and International Rescue Committee, *The long road home: Achieving durable solutions to Displacement in Iraq: lessons from returns in Anbar*, February 2018, [www.reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/thelongroadhomefinal28022018\\_0.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/thelongroadhomefinal28022018_0.pdf)

156 Interview with “Munifa” (real name withheld) on 21 January 2018.

157 Many orders and agreements blocking the return of families with perceived IS ties are issued verbally. However, there are examples of more formal agreements that have prevented the return of families with perceived IS ties to their places of origin, including the July 2016 Anbar Covenant, enforced by representatives of the western tribes of Anbar Government, the November 2016 Heet Covenant, which was endorsed by tribal leaders in the Heet sub-district of Anbar, and the May 2017 al-Sabaawi agreement, which was endorsed by al-Sabaawi

and children with a perceived affiliation to IS. Some allow the women of families with perceived ties to IS to return, but not their children. Others allow the women and their daughters to return, but not their sons. Some allow children with perceived ties to IS to return only if they are younger than a specified age.<sup>158</sup>

For instance, a social worker described an agreement currently in place in the district of Shirqat, in Salah al-Din governorate: “For Shirqat... they issued a law that if the woman marries again, she can return, but only if she goes back without her children. They will send the children back to the IS member’s family. The tribal council made this decision.”<sup>159</sup> “Sama” told Amnesty International about the agreement put in place by the tribal authorities in her village, near the village of Jedaa in Ninewa governorate: “Because I have sons, I can’t return to my village. If I had daughters, it would be easier. This is the decision of the tribal council, because they believe that any sons in ‘IS families’ will become IS fighters. My family promised me that, if the decision changes, they will allow us to return. But for now, we will stay in the camp.”<sup>160</sup>

The PMU militia present in “Jihan’s” area of Hamam al-Alil, a town near Mosul, stipulated that female heads of household could return, but placed an age cap on the children. She explained: “The *Hashd* [PMU] told my in-laws that anyone born before 2000 couldn’t enter the village or they would be taken. I don’t want to go back anyway... My sister was slapped [by members of the PMU]... They told her, ‘We will rip you into two halves from your vagina.’”<sup>161</sup> According to “Mona”, the militia and tribe in Jedaa village, near Mosul, banned all children with perceived ties to IS from returning:

*Now, the Hashd [PMU] have destroyed my house and even my mother and brother have stopped coming to visit [in the camp]... They are under pressure from the tribe not to come. They want me to leave my children if I want to go back. How? What does that mean? Where am I supposed to put them? This is what happens to “IS wives”... they tear apart your family and then shame you like it’s your fault.*<sup>162</sup>

According to several international humanitarian actors, blocks on the return of children are leading to family separation, as many women send their children to live with extended family. It has also led to the presence of a number of unaccompanied minors in the camps, as women have been forced to leave their children behind.<sup>163</sup>

Other orders from tribal and local authorities stipulate that the woman head of household or her daughters must remarry before she returns to her place of origin. For instance, “Nawal”, a 51-year-old woman who wished to return to Shirqat in Salah al-Din governorate, explained her situation: “We cannot go back... [My tribe] say I have to marry my daughters to them so we can go back. How can I do that? We don’t know if their husbands are dead or alive. What if they are alive? Marriage should be by choice, not by humiliation.”<sup>164</sup>

“Anhar”, from Rajm al-Hadid neighbourhood in west Mosul, faced similar obstacles. She told Amnesty International:

*[My tribe] accuses me of being with IS and still being in touch with my husband, so I can’t go back there. I can’t rent out our old house, and I can’t sell it. The Hashd [PMU] are there now. One of them sent a message that, if I gave him my daughter, I could return home. But even if I did this, and returned home, I wouldn’t be safe. The mukhtar [community leader] of the village said to us, “If you return, be sure: the Federal Police will take you and your daughters out every night.” So I am stuck here with my daughters. What can I do? I am scared he will create big problems for us... Everyone here is saying to us that they know why we are here. They say we are an “IS family” and our tribe refused to take us back... Now, I am just trying to keep my dignity. We won’t leave this camp. It’s better here for my daughters and their children.*<sup>165</sup>

Families with perceived IS ties are also unable to return home because their homes were destroyed, confiscated or looted by members of the community, Iraqi forces including the PMU, or government-aligned militias, leaving these families with nowhere to return. For instance, “Asil”, from the village of Imam Gharbi,

---

tribal representatives in the Qayyara sub-district of Mosul district. For more details, see UN Assistance Mission for Iraq and Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Promotion and protection of rights of victims of sexual violence captured by ISIL/or in areas controlled by ISIL in Iraq*, 22 August 2017, [www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRReport22Aug2017\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRReport22Aug2017_EN.pdf)

158 Information from, for example, interviews with “Jihan” (real name withheld) on 12 December 2017, “Sama” (real name withheld) on 15 December 2017 and “Amani” (real name withheld) on 24 January 2018.

159 Interview with social worker for international humanitarian organization on 25 January 2018.

160 Interview with “Sama” (real name withheld) on 15 December 2017.

161 Interview with “Jihan” (real name withheld) on 12 December 2017.

162 Interview with “Mona” (real name withheld) on 25 January 2018.

163 Interview with staff member of international humanitarian organization on 11 February 2018.

164 Interview with “Nawal” (real name withheld) on 20 January 2018.

165 Interview with “Anhar” (real name withheld) on 25 January 2018.

located in the Qayyara district of Ninewa governorate, told Amnesty International: “The problem is that our tribe rejected us, even though we did nothing to harm anyone. I can’t return to my home. My tribe and extended family burned my house, and they stole everything from us. How can I go back there? Now I have nothing. The government should begin a reconciliation project between us and the tribes.”<sup>166</sup>

## 6.2 MISTREATMENT IN PLACES OF ORIGIN

Families with perceived IS ties have reported being subjected to forced displacement, evictions, arrests, looting of their homes, house demolitions, threats, sexual abuse and harassment, and discrimination after returning to their places of origin. Those carrying out this treatment include the local authorities, Iraqi forces, including the PMU, local militias and members of the families’ tribe and community.<sup>167</sup> Families who left the camp for an area, such as Mosul, from which they had not been barred by orders from tribal or local authorities, faced similar treatment. They reported facing this treatment either before they fled to the camp or after leaving the camp.

“Mona” told Amnesty International that she had been forced to flee to Jedaa 1 camp after being threatened by an armed man:

*I went back to Jedaa village for four months. I stayed with my mother. My children and I were prisoners. We never dared to go out. People would insult us in the street. My heart was about to burst. One day, the sheikh [tribal leader] sent a young armed man to my mother’s house. He said, “She either goes to the camp or to prison.” Is that fair? In the village, the [Tribal Mobilization militias] destroyed our house, even though everyone knows my husband hurt no one. He was so loved.<sup>168</sup>*

“Zeinab” told Amnesty International that she and her family were subjected to harassment, arrest, and sexual violence when they left Hamam al-Alil camp to return to east Mosul. She said: “We went back to east Mosul... After 10 days, the attacks and harassment started. There was a raid by the security forces on 17 July 2017, in the night. Their behaviour was terrible. They searched through everything... They swore at us and used terrible words. They stole our gold and our money.”<sup>169</sup>

“Samar”, her daughter, continued:

*The [security forces] arrested me, my sister, my sister-in-law, and my two cousins, and they swore at me. I can’t say the words they said. They took us to their headquarters... They asked whether my husband was an IS fighter. Whether we said the truth or not, they would beat us. They touched our bodies and abused us. They interrogated us alone. My brother and husband were IS fighters, so they asked what they did, where they went, whether they were involved in battles. Sometimes I didn’t have the answers and, when I didn’t, they beat me. They didn’t trust me, no matter what I said.<sup>170</sup>*

After the investigation, “Samar” was sent to a women’s prison in Tikrit, where she was detained for 23 days and said she was beaten several times. She was then transferred to a women’s prison in Kirkuk, where she was detained for two months before being released. After this experience, her mother said, “We prefer to stay in this tent. We don’t like anyone to know that we are here. I am always scared about my daughter being arrested again.”<sup>171</sup>

“Iman” described how she and her 12-year-old son were forced to leave their village of Menira in al-Shoura District, Ninewa governorate:

*When we arrived people really hated it. They jeered and taunted us. From the moment we got into the house [of her relatives], we never left its walls. My son was imprisoned. He had gone yellow after a while. He didn’t see the sun except in the courtyard. Then I heard them destroy my house [which was nearby]. I didn’t have the heart to go to the courtyard and look. I only listened and cried... Eventually, my two brothers told me I had to go... My brothers told me that when my son grew up he’d have to leave and go to where he couldn’t be found. He could never show his face... At least here, in the cage of the camp, my son is free to move around. I want to stay here forever. I*

---

166 Interview with “Asil” (real name withheld) on 25 January 2018.

167 For more details on forcible displacement of families with perceived IS ties into IDP camps, see Human Rights Watch, “Families with ISIS relatives forced into camps”, 4 February 2018, [www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/04/families-isis-relatives-forced-camps](http://www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/04/families-isis-relatives-forced-camps)

168 Interview with “Mona” (real name withheld) on 25 January 2018.

169 Interview with “Zeinab” (real name withheld) on 20 January 2018.

170 Interview with “Samar” (real name withheld) on 20 January 2018.

171 Interview with “Samar” (real name withheld) on 20 January 2018.

*want to keep my son in this cage. I am waiting for my brothers' mercy... They say these camps are warehouses. That is why my brothers wanted me to come here. They think that's what I deserve.*<sup>172</sup>

Humanitarian workers told Amnesty International that families with perceived IS ties are also facing routine discrimination in the provision of essential services in several villages and neighbourhoods.<sup>173</sup> An international aid worker explained how the discrimination has worked in Mosul: "Houses are marked 'Daeshi'. These houses will then be cut off by local authorities or security actors from all essential services – electricity, water, everything... If people do make it out of the camps, this will be the next problem they will face."<sup>174</sup>

## 6.3 'BOOMERANG' RETURNS TO THE CAMPS

Due to the mistreatment described above, many families with perceived IS affiliation have "boomeranged" back into IDP camps after attempting to leave. For instance, "Rania" described her experience when she left Jedaa 1 camp, returned to her home in west Mosul, and finally fled back to Hamam al-Alil camp:

*I had no income source [in the camp], so I decided to go back to Mosul. I was with my children, my mother and my sister. I was not safe in my house... it is especially risky for women on their own... In July [2017], they came to the house and wrote "Daeshi" on it. We kept cleaning it, but they returned three times in one week and wrote the same word. A neighbour said to us: "We have to kill the IS families – you are a disease in the community"... One day a man came and knocked on the door... He said the central government had prepared a special camp for IS women and children, on the border with Iran. He said we have to go there immediately. He said he was working with the National Security Services, and he told us, "I can do anything I want with you"... So we came here... I'm in an impossible situation. The people with no options come here.*<sup>175</sup>

Women with perceived IS ties also told Amnesty International that they had left the camp only to be turned back at checkpoints due to their relatives showing up on "wanted lists" of men with IS affiliation or because they did not have what the security forces deemed the proper documentation. For instance, "Munifa" explained her family's experience:

*It was a bad situation [in an IDP camp near Tal Afar] – the kids were really cold. So we tried to return home [in Anbar governorate]. They didn't allow us to cross through the checkpoints, so we came back here [to Hamam al-Alil]. The reason was that my sister-in-law got married during the IS period, and they wouldn't accept the marriage certificate. She has a baby, so the men at the checkpoint were asking her, "Why do you have kids without being married?" So they forced us to come here.*<sup>176</sup>

## 6.4 A BLEAK FUTURE

*"We have no income and no refuge. Our children are illiterate and our men are dead. We sit here wasting away, waiting to die."*

"Huda", member of female-headed household in Hamam al-Alil camp<sup>177</sup>

Iraqi families with perceived IS ties have few and bleak options. They must either face harassment, intimidation, insecurity, poverty, exploitation and isolation in IDP camps, or endure similar or even worse treatment outside of the camps.

Many women are particularly concerned about the lack of educational opportunities for their children in the camps. A few IDP camps in Iraq offer educational programmes that are recognized by Iraq's official educational curriculum or allow students to travel to schools near the camp. However, most camps offer

---

172 Interview with "Iman" (real name withheld) on 25 January 2018.

173 Interviews with staff members of international humanitarian organizations on 11 and 15 February 2018.

174 Interview with staff member of international humanitarian organization on 11 February 2018. "Daesh" is the Arabic acronym of the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), the former name of IS.

175 Interview with "Rania" (real name withheld) on 21 January 2018.

176 Interview with "Munifa" (real name withheld) on 21 January 2018.

177 Interview with "Huda" (real name withheld) on 23 January 2018.

either curriculums that are not recognized by the Iraqi educational system, informal “play spaces” for children that offer only rudimentary educational training, or no educational options at all.

“Zeinab” shared her concerns: “At the current moment, our priority is to get the kids in school and to get them an education. Our number one priority now is education. There is no real school here. There is not an official school in the camp. All of my children – aged eight, nine and 10 – they don’t know even how to write their names.”<sup>178</sup> “Wafa” expressed a similar worry: “My youngest son should be in school,” she said. “He just wants to read, or even to remind himself of reading. He picks up any box or piece of paper and pretends to read it.”<sup>179</sup> “Sara” told Amnesty International her hope for the future: “All I want is safety, stability and for my children to go back to school.”<sup>180</sup>

Five women with perceived IS affiliation told Amnesty International that their current situations were so difficult that they had either attempted to commit suicide or had plans to do so in the future. “Maha” told Amnesty International: “Sometimes I ask myself: why didn’t I just die in an air strike? I attempted to commit suicide, but I didn’t follow through. I put the kerosene on myself, but before I set it on fire I thought of my son. I feel I am at my end. I am in a prison here. I am completely alone – without my husband, my father – no one is with me any more.”<sup>181</sup>

“Hanin” had confined herself and her family to their tent out of fear that they would be sexually exploited or arrested. She said: “I think about committing suicide all the time. Maybe we will all do it together – we could burn the tent to the ground. We don’t have any relatives, or any neighbours to look out for us. All of them stand against us. There is no hope for us.”<sup>182</sup> Her 25-year-old daughter, “Rima”, added: “It’s not fair for us and all the families to be punished... Burning the tent down or poisoning ourselves are our only solutions.”<sup>183</sup>

Several women told Amnesty International that they felt their only option was to try to leave Iraq. “Maha” explained: “Because we are an ‘IS family’, my relatives took my house, and they took our sheep. This is my situation. From whom can I demand my rights? I think now I just need to leave Iraq. There is no place for us here. This is no longer our country.”<sup>184</sup> “Tasmin” added: “For us, it was a terrible experience to be under IS, and now we face an even harder test... We are rejected by everyone... Can you just take us by helicopters out of here? We can’t live here any more.”<sup>185</sup>

---

178 Interview with “Zeinab” (real name withheld) on 20 January 2018.

179 Interview with “Wafa” (real name withheld) on 17 January 2018.

180 Interview with “Sara” (real name withheld) on 19 January 2018.

181 Interview with “Maha” (real name withheld) on 21 January 2018.

182 Interview with “Hanin” (real name withheld) on 23 January 2018.

183 Interview with “Rima” (real name withheld) on 23 January 2018.

184 Interview with “Maha” (real name withheld) on 21 January 2018.

185 Interview with “Tasmin” (real name withheld) on 28 January 2018.

# 7. APPLICATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

International human rights law, covering civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, applies both in peacetime and during armed conflict and is legally binding on states, their armed forces and other agents. It establishes the right of victims of human rights violations to remedies, including justice, truth and reparation. Iraq is a state party to many of the principal international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons against Enforced Disappearance, and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

In situations of armed conflict, international humanitarian law, sometimes known as the laws of war, governs the conduct of the parties to an armed conflict and applies alongside human rights law. International humanitarian law sets out rules of humane conduct that aim to minimize human suffering and offer special protection to civilians and those not directly participating in hostilities, including all those *hors de combat* as a result of capture, surrender or injury.

Iraq is a state party to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocol of 1977 relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I). Article 3, common to the four Geneva Conventions, which is applicable to non-international armed conflicts, such as the one taking place in Iraq, prohibits “murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture”, “humiliating and degrading treatment”, “taking of hostages” and “the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgement pronounced by a regularly constituted court”. These rules are legally binding on all parties to the conflict in Iraq, namely Iraqi forces including the PMU, other government-aligned militias, Kurdish Regional Government forces and IS. The parties are also bound by the customary rules of international humanitarian law applicable in non-international armed conflict.<sup>186</sup> Customary rules relevant to this report include the prohibition of rape and other forms of sexual violence<sup>187</sup>, the prohibition of enforced disappearance<sup>188</sup>, and the prohibition of collective punishments.<sup>189</sup> Serious violations of international humanitarian law, including of the rules cited above, constitute war crimes.<sup>190</sup> And those who commit or order war crimes are individually criminally responsible.<sup>191</sup> States have an obligation to investigate war crimes committed by their forces, or on their territory, or over which they otherwise have jurisdiction, and to prosecute the suspects.<sup>192</sup> And they should provide full reparation to victims of violations of international humanitarian law.<sup>193</sup>

---

186 International Committee of the Red Cross, *Customary International Humanitarian Law, Vol. 1: The Rules* (hereinafter: ICRC, Customary IHL).

187 ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 93.

188 ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 98.

189 ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 103.

190 ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 156.

191 ICRC, Customary IHL, Rules 151 and 152.

192 ICRC, Customary IHL, Rules 158 and 159.

193 ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 150.

The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which draw on international human rights law and international humanitarian law, provide more detailed guidance on ensuring the rights of displaced persons.<sup>194</sup>

## 7.1 ARBITRARY DETENTION, EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTION, ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES AND TORTURE

Iraq has a duty to respect, protect and fulfil the rights to life, to freedom from torture and other ill-treatment, to liberty and security of the person and to a fair trial. By failing to prevent and remedy extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention and torture by Iraqi forces, including the PMU, and other government-aligned militias, Iraq is violating its legal obligations and can be held responsible for these gross human rights violations.

### 7.1.1 ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

As a state party of the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons against Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED), Iraq is required to criminalize enforced disappearances (Article 3), and investigate and bring to justice any person who “commits, orders, solicits or induces” or attempts to commit an enforced disappearance (Article 6). Article 5 of the ICPPED notes that “the widespread or systematic practice of enforced disappearance constitutes a crime against humanity as defined in applicable international law.” Because enforced disappearances can violate several human rights simultaneously – including the right to liberty and security of the person, the right to life and the right not to be subjected to torture and other ill-treatment – they are referred to as “multiple” or “cumulative” human rights violations. An enforced disappearance is also a “continuing crime”, which takes place so long as the disappeared person remains missing and information about his or her fate or whereabouts has not been provided by the state responsible.

The ICPPED codifies the right of each victim to know “the truth regarding the circumstances of the enforced disappearance, the progress and results of the investigation and the fate of the disappeared person”.<sup>195</sup> This includes measures “to search for, locate and release disappeared persons and, in the event of death, to locate, respect and return their remains”. The ICPPED also provides that that state shall ensure victims have the right “to obtain reparation and prompt, fair and adequate compensation”.<sup>196</sup>

The victims of enforced disappearance are not limited only to those who have been disappeared. The ICPPED defines victims as “any individual who has suffered harm as the direct result of an enforced disappearance”.<sup>197</sup> It is settled jurisprudence that an enforced disappearance may cause such severe mental distress as to breach the family members’ right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.<sup>198</sup> In Iraq, the victims of enforced disappearance may therefore include family members who have been subjected to severe mental distress as a result of their relatives’ enforced disappearance.

---

194 UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, UN Doc. E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2 (hereinafter: UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement).

195 ICPPED, Article 24(2).

196 ICPPED, Articles 25(2) and 24(4).

197 ICPPED, Article 24(1).

198 See European Court of Human Rights, *Ashlakhanova v. Russia*, 18 December 2012, *Orhan v. Turkey*, 18 June 2002, and *Imakayeva v. Russia*, no. 7615/02, ECHR 2006-XIII, *Kurt v Turkey*, 25 May 1998; Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Godonez Cruz Case, Compensatory Damages (Article 63(1) American Convention on Human Rights), Judgment of 21 July 1989, Inter-American Court of Human Rights (Ser. C) No. 8 (1990), paras 48-9; UN Human Rights Committee, *Celis Laureano v. Peru*, Communication 540/1993, Views, 25 March 1996, para. 8.5, *Katombe L. Tshishimbi v. Zaire*, Communication 542/1993, Views, 26 March 1996, para. 5.5, *Youssef El-Megreisi v. the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya*, Communication 440/1990, para. 5.4, *Mojica v. Dominican Republic*, Communication 449/1991, para. 5.7.



## 7.1.2 ARBITRARY DETENTION

Under international human rights law, all persons have a right to liberty and, in turn, the right not to be arbitrarily detained.<sup>199</sup> Individuals may only be detained in relation to a recognizable criminal offence, on grounds provided for in law, in line with the principle of legality. Detention is arbitrary unless detainees are provided with due process.<sup>200</sup> All persons detained must be informed at the time of their arrest of the reason for arrest and any charges against them; be brought promptly before a judge to challenge the lawfulness of their detention; and given a fair trial.<sup>201</sup>

The screening methods used by Iraqi forces, including the PMU, Kurdish forces, and government-aligned militias at sites near the front lines of the battle with IS included checking to see whether the individual's name or the name of a relative was included in "wanted lists" containing information of dubious and vague origin and relying on the real-time guidance of other community members. In many cases, these screening methods violated the men and boys' rights to due process and have therefore led to their arbitrary detention or, even more seriously, to their enforced disappearance or extrajudicial execution.

The families Amnesty International interviewed at al-Shahama camp in Salah al-Din governorate were not investigated in relation to a recognizable criminal offence. None reported being asked questions about themselves or any crimes they may have committed. Those who were informed of the reasons they were sent to and held in al-Shahama camp were told they were held there because their relatives were involved with IS. Many of these families have been prevented from leaving the camp for months and yet were never charged or brought before a judge. Detaining women and children merely on the basis that they have relatives involved with IS is not a legitimate basis for detention under international law and is therefore arbitrary.

### NON-DISCRIMINATION

Several of the abuses documented in this report relate to discrimination. Discrimination occurs when a person is unable to enjoy his or her human rights or other legal rights on an equal basis with others because of an unjustified distinction made in policy, law or treatment based on any of the prohibited grounds. The prohibited grounds include: race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.<sup>202</sup> States are required to ensure substantive equality, which means that it is not enough to ensure equal treatment on the basis of sex and gender, but that states must take positive actions to ensure the equality as an end result, including where necessary through temporary special measures.<sup>203</sup>

States must also identify and recognize intersectional forms of discrimination, where different forms of discrimination intersect to affect the form and severity of unfavourable treatment that individuals face, and seek to address it in their decision and policy-making. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women has clarified that states must "address the specific risks and particular needs of different groups of internally displaced and refugee women who are subjected to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including women with disabilities, older women, girls, widows, women who head households, pregnant women."<sup>204</sup>

Women perceived to be affiliated with IS face particular and compounded forms of discrimination on the basis of their gender, status as female head of households and perceived political affiliation, which the Iraqi state should specifically recognise and pro-actively address.

## 7.2 RIGHTS TO FOOD, WATER AND HEALTH CARE AND TO EDUCATION

When displacement occurs, international humanitarian law requires that all possible measures are to be taken to ensure that displaced civilians receive adequate shelter, enjoy satisfactory hygiene, health, safety and nutrition.<sup>205</sup> The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognizes the right to

199 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 9(1).

200 See, for example, UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Communication, 9 February 2011, Section II.

201 ICCPR, Article 9(2-4).

202 ICCPR, Article 2.

203 UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) General Recommendation no. 28.

204 CEDAW General Recommendation no. 30, paras 7 and 57.

205 ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 131.

an adequate standard of living, including adequate food and “the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger”.<sup>206</sup> It also sets out the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, to which access to health care is an essential component.<sup>207</sup> The right to an adequate standard of living also includes the right to water and sanitation.<sup>208</sup> The Covenant also enshrines everyone’s right to education, including the right to free and compulsory primary education, the accessibility and availability of secondary and higher education and the progressive realisation of free secondary and higher education.<sup>209</sup>

According to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Iraq is obliged, at a minimum, to ensure “access to the minimum essential food which is sufficient, nutritionally adequate and safe, to ensure... freedom from hunger.”<sup>210</sup> Iraq must also ensure, even in times of disaster, the satisfaction of, at the very least, the minimum essential level of water that is sufficient and safe for personal and domestic uses to prevent disease, and ensure access to primary health care.<sup>211</sup> They must also do so without discrimination. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has stated that the right to non-discrimination in access to economic, social and cultural rights is an obligation of immediate effect.<sup>212</sup> The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement also stipulate that all humanitarian aid and assistance shall be carried out in accordance with the principles of humanity and impartiality and without discrimination.<sup>213</sup>

Iraq is required to ensure that quantity of water available for each person should correspond to the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, to ensure a sufficient number of water outlets to avoid prohibitive waiting times, and to ensure personal security is not threatened when having to physically access water.<sup>214</sup> Priority in the provision of aid, distribution and management of water and water facilities should be given to the most vulnerable or marginalized groups of the population.<sup>215</sup>

From the accounts of women whom Amnesty International interviewed, women and children who were perceived to be affiliated with IS were not always able to access adequate levels of food assistance to ensure their freedom from hunger, and they faced discrimination in accessing food and other forms of assistance in IDP camps. Therefore, in such cases, the Iraqi authorities have violated the right of non-discrimination and the rights to food, water and health care of those affected. At a minimum, the authorities are falling short of their obligations by failing to take steps to ensure that female-headed households with perceived IS ties can access food assistance on the basis of equality with other displaced persons, including by monitoring these women’s access to food assistance, and, where appropriate, targeting assistance to these women and children.

## 7.3 RIGHT TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A PERSON BEFORE THE LAW

The right to be recognized as a person before the law is enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.<sup>216</sup> The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has stated that governments should guarantee that “conflict-affected women and girls have equal rights to obtain documents necessary for the exercise of their legal rights and the right to have such documentation issued in their own names, and ensure the prompt issuance or replacement of documents without imposing unreasonable conditions” as well as to “ensure the timely and equal registration of all births, marriages and divorces.”<sup>217</sup> As regards the displaced, the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement specify: “The authorities concerned shall issue to them all documents necessary for the enjoyment and exercise of their legal rights, such as passports, personal identification documents, birth certificates and marriage certificates. In particular, the authorities shall facilitate the issuance of new documents or the replacement of documents

---

206 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Article 11.

207 ICESCR, Article 12.

208 UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) General Comments no. 6 and no. 15.

209 ICESCR, Article 13.

210 CESCR General Comment no. 12, para. 14.

211 CESCR General Comment no. 3; General Comment no. 12, paras 6 and 17; General Comment no. 14, para. 43; General Comment no. 15, para. 37.

212 CESCR General Comment no. 20.

213 UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Principle 24(1).

214 CESCR General Comment no. 15, referencing World Health Organization, *Guidelines for Drinking-Water Quality*, 1993, [www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/dwq/2edvol1i.pdf](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/dwq/2edvol1i.pdf)

215 CESCR General Comment no. 15.

216 ICCPR, Article 16.

217 CEDAW General Recommendation no. 30.

lost in the course of displacement, without imposing unreasonable conditions, such as requiring the return to one's area of habitual residence in order to obtain these or other required documents."<sup>218</sup>

In Iraq, having a legal identity registered in a national identity card and other civil documents – such as welfare cards, passports, and certificates of birth, death and marriage – allows a person to hold other rights under law, such as moving freely within the country and accessing basic services such as health care and education. For Iraqis, having a legal identity also enables access to humanitarian assistance for displaced persons as well as family pensions and welfare. In Iraq, children without birth certificates may be considered stateless.

The consistent refusal by the Iraqi authorities to allow families with perceived ties to IS to obtain new or replacement civil identity documents may constitute a violation of these families' rights to be recognized as a person before the law. This refusal is also a violation of these families' rights to equality and non-discrimination.

## 7.4 FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

International human rights law provides for the right to freedom of movement.<sup>219</sup> Restrictions may be permitted when necessary to protect national security or public order, but any restrictions must be provided for in law, proportionate, non-discriminatory, and consistent with other human rights.<sup>220</sup> The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement also stipulate that displaced persons have the right to move freely in and out of camps.<sup>221</sup>

Women and children at al-Shahama camp have been prohibited from leaving, many for several months or more than a year. Families at this camp are only allowed to leave the camp if they receive special permission from camp authorities to access the nearby hospital. In effect, they have been kept in de facto detention. Women and children at other IDP camps told Amnesty International that they had been forbidden to leave their camp by camp authorities due to their perceived ties with IS, whether because they were unable to obtain replacement identity cards or because the camp authorities had confiscated their identity cards.

These extreme restrictions on the movement of families with perceived IS ties do not appear to meet the requirements of necessity and proportionality. While there may be legitimate security needs to impose some restrictions on the movements of displaced people, the confinement of IDPs to camps for months or even years on the mere basis of perceived familial or other association with IS is not lawful. Furthermore, freedom of movement restrictions imposed more tightly on women and children with perceived IS ties are discriminatory and hence unlawful. Unnecessary or disproportionate restrictions that have a negative impact on displaced persons' ability to access adequate food or water, work or health care are also a violation of their economic, social and cultural rights, which are non-derogable.<sup>222</sup>

In addition to the guarantees of freedom of movement set out above, international humanitarian law provides to displaced persons the right to voluntary return in safety to their homes as soon as the reason for their displacement ceases to exist.<sup>223</sup> The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement specify that whatever the original circumstances of the displacement, the competent authorities have the responsibility to help establish conditions for, and to facilitate, the safe, voluntary return of the displaced to their homes and to choose their residence.<sup>224</sup> Under the UN Guiding Principles, the authorities also have the duty to help displaced persons recover their property and possessions and, where this is not possible, to obtain appropriate compensation or another form of just reparation.<sup>225</sup>

By failing to guarantee the rights of all women and children to return to their places of origin, regardless of the background of their family members, the Iraqi authorities are not meeting their obligations to those concerned. They are also falling short of fulfilling their duty to help these families recover property and possessions that have been looted or destroyed or, when that is not possible, to provide another form of reparation.

---

218 UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Principle 20(2).

219 ICCPR, Article 12(1).

220 ICCPR, Article 12(3). See also, UN Human Rights Committee General Comment no. 27.

221 UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Principle 14.

222 ICESCR.

223 ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 132.

224 UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Principles 14 and 28(1).

225 UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Principle 29(2).

## 7.5 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE INCLUDING RAPE AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Rape is defined under international law as sexual penetration or invasion, however slight, where it occurs without the consent of the victim.<sup>226</sup> Consent for this purpose must be given voluntarily, as a result of the victim's free will, assessed in the context of the surrounding circumstances.

A number of circumstances, if present, make any consent invalid. These include force or the threat of force or coercive circumstances. Coercive circumstances that negate consent include circumstances created by the perpetrator, including fear of violence, duress, detention contexts, and the abuse of power. Consent is also negated when the perpetrator takes advantage of coercive circumstances that already exist, even if they are not of their own making, such as those already inherent to an armed conflict.<sup>227</sup>

Sexual exploitation can be described as any actual or attempted abuse of position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.<sup>228</sup>

Rape and sexual exploitation are a form of gender-based violence, defined by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women as “violence which is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately”.<sup>229</sup> Gender-based violence is a violation of a number of women's human rights, including to equality and non-discrimination. Among other obligations, states are responsible for preventing these acts or omissions by their own organs and agents including through training and the adoption, implementation and monitoring of legal provisions, administrative regulations and codes of conduct – and to investigate, prosecute and apply appropriate legal or disciplinary sanctions.<sup>230</sup> States are also required to adopt and implement measures to eradicate prejudices, stereotypes and practices that are the root cause of gender-based violence against women.<sup>231</sup>

Rape may also violate the prohibition on torture and other ill-treatment. It also violates international humanitarian law and can constitute a war crime.

The violations addressed in “5.5.1 Rape and Attempted Rape”, in which perpetrators sexually penetrated women in a context in which no consent was given, constitute rape.

Some of the violations addressed in “5.5.2 Sexual Exploitation” could also constitute rape, as they involve armed actors and others who sexually penetrated women in circumstances in which any consent, even if given, would not be considered valid because the perpetrator created and/or took advantage of coercive circumstances. Several factors contribute to the existence or creation of coercive circumstances, including that, in some cases, if these women did not submit to demands for sex: 1) they would be at greater risk of being hurt, killed, or pressured into having sex by others in the camp; 2) they would not have access to food or water for themselves or their families, or not to an adequate standard; 3) they would be refused access to medical care; 4) they would not be able to move freely inside the camp or leave the camp. Furthermore, the primary perpetrators of the sexual exploitation addressed in this report were armed actors, including security guards, military and militia personnel, as well as camp authorities, who hold undisputed power over these women.

States should ensure that survivors of crimes of sexual and gender-based violence under international law are guaranteed their sexual and reproductive rights and can access the full range of sexual and reproductive health and information services if required, including psychological support and counselling, emergency contraception, HIV counselling, testing and post-exposure prophylaxis, safe and legal abortion and maternal health support.<sup>232</sup> Humanitarian actors and women Amnesty International interviewed who had survived sexual violence raised concerns that survivors were not always able to access these rights, which led to a number of consequences, including sexually transmitted infections and unsafe abortions.

---

226 See ICC elements of crimes, Elements 1, Article 7(1)(g)-1 and Article 8(2)(e)(vi)-1(2).

227 For more details, see Amnesty International, *Rape and sexual violence: Human Rights law and standards in the international criminal court* (Index: IOR 53/001/2011).

228 See UN Secretariat, *Secretary-General's bulletin: Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse*, 9 October 2003, [www.oios.un.org/resources/2015/01/ST-SGB-2003-13.pdf](http://www.oios.un.org/resources/2015/01/ST-SGB-2003-13.pdf)

229 CEDAW General Recommendations no. 19 and no. 35.

230 See, for example, CEDAW General Recommendations no. 19 and no. 35.

231 CEDAW General Recommendation no. 35.

232 For more information, see Amnesty International, *Combating sexual violence in conflict: Recommendations to States at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict* (Index: IOR 53/006/2014).

# 8. CONCLUSION

**“We want to face reality and get ready for the next stage in life, instead of just waiting... We are always at risk of harassment, hunger and humiliation. We are the last of the last.”**

“Abeer”, member of female-headed household in Jedaa 6 camp<sup>233</sup>

Many thousands of Iraqi women and children with perceived ties to IS have been isolated, trapped and exploited in Iraq. In IDP camps, they have been denied access to food, water and health care. Many have been blocked from obtaining identity cards and other essential civil documents, which means that many cannot work or attend school. They face severe restrictions on their movement, whether because they lack the proper documentation or because they are held in de facto detention by camp authorities. The women face sexual harassment, sexual violence and sexual exploitation. Tribal authorities and militias have consistently prevented these women and children from returning to their homes, effectively quarantining them in IDP camps.

The situation of women and children with perceived ties to IS is already desperate, but is likely to get even worse. In the coming year, international funding for the humanitarian crisis in Iraq will sharply decrease and will be allocated to “priority areas”, according to Iraq’s 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan.<sup>234</sup> As one staff member of an international organization put it, “there are massive funding shortfalls.”<sup>235</sup> In light of this decrease in funding and in advance of Iraq’s parliamentary elections in May 2018, displaced people are being strongly encouraged to leave IDP camps, and the Iraqi government and international partners’ priority will be the closure and consolidation of IDP camps.

Accordingly, the abuses and risks highlighted in this report are extremely likely to increase. International organizations’ diminished role in the management of IDP camps will mean that armed actors have an even more prominent role there, and that sexual violence including sexual exploitation is likely to become even more rampant. International organizations will be unable to invest in long-term programming, such as providing education for children. IDP camps will have a far greater proportion of families with perceived ties to IS, since these families will either be blocked entirely from returning home by tribal authorities or militias, or will be forced to “boomerang” back into the camps after attempting to return home and facing mistreatment there. Without robust national and international efforts to address the treatment of these women and children, this increasingly concentrated population of vulnerable families is likely to become even further isolated and exploited.

If they are not addressed and curtailed, the injustices endured by women and children with perceived IS ties could sow the seeds for the next round of inter-communal violence and atrocities in Iraq. One international journalist called the situation a “time bomb”. She continued: “There is no better place to raise a new

---

<sup>233</sup> Interview with “Abeer” (real name withheld) on 12 December 2017.

<sup>234</sup> UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Iraq: 2018 humanitarian response plan - advance executive summary*, February 2018, [www.reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-2018-humanitarian-response-plan-advance-executive-summary-enar](http://www.reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-2018-humanitarian-response-plan-advance-executive-summary-enar)

<sup>235</sup> Interview with international humanitarian worker on 15 February 2018.

generation of terrorists than in these camps.”<sup>236</sup> An international humanitarian worker echoed this point, saying, “We need to wake up and alleviate this suffering... These camps are incubators.”<sup>237</sup>

Many members of female-headed families with perceived IS ties agreed. They shared their fears with Amnesty International about the likely consequences of their mistreatment. “Wafa” said simply: “There are no human rights here in this camp. You are building a new generation here – a savage generation. They will be the next generation of IS.”<sup>238</sup> “Hanan”, whose husband and son were killed in the fighting in Mosul, shared her thoughts on the future:

*When the government gives us a positive sign, I will go back and get back to life. For now, I am waiting. If I was allowed to return back home, it would be much better for my children. It's not good to put all of these “IS children” in one place – they will just become more extreme. It's much better for them to be a part of the community. This is the only way that we can avoid the same thing happening again.*<sup>239</sup>

“Lina” expressed a similar sentiment:

*For us, it was a terrible experience to be under IS, and now we face an even harder test... We are rejected by everyone... As mothers, we can bear this treatment, but what about our children? This treatment will create a new IS. For sure, this is what this terrible camp will produce. If we lived in a village, outside the camp, maybe we can teach our children to go on a better path. All we want is safety and stability. We want to live with others, and to enter the community again.*<sup>240</sup>

As these and other women have told Amnesty International, if the Iraqi authorities and the international community fail to address the collective punishment of families with perceived IS ties, their treatment could create the conditions for the next cycle of violence in Iraq. With the territorial battle with IS finally having reached its conclusion, there is no better time to put an end to the marginalization and mistreatment that has led to such a terrible legacy of suffering.

---

236 Interview with international journalist on 20 November 2017.

237 Interview with staff member of international humanitarian organization on 13 December 2017.

238 Interview with “Wafa” (real name withheld) on 17 January 2018.

239 Interview with “Hanan” (real name withheld) on 12 December 2017.

240 Interview with “Lina” (real name withheld) on 28 January 2018.

# 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings in this report, Amnesty International is proposing the following recommendations to the Iraqi authorities, UN agencies, international and national organizations operating in Iraq and international donors.

## TO THE IRAQI AUTHORITIES

### END ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE, TORTURE, EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS AND ARBITRARY DETENTION

- Ensure that all those deprived of liberty are held in officially recognized and supervised places of detention, have immediate access to their family and lawyers and are registered in a centralized register of detainees accessible to their lawyers and families at all times upon request and without delay.
- Inform families of the fate, whereabouts and legal status of all persons in their custody and respond to all outstanding requests.
- Ensure that detainees are provided with the means to communicate with their families and to inform them of their place of detention.
- Ensure that statements obtained through torture or other coercion are inadmissible as evidence in any proceedings.
- Immediately establish an official moratorium on executions and commute all death sentences with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

### RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF DISPLACED WOMEN AND CHILDREN WITH PERCEIVED TIES TO IS

#### PRESENCE OF ARMED ACTORS IN IDP CAMPS

- To preserve the civilian and humanitarian character of IDP camps, prevent all armed actors, including security guards, military and militia personnel, from entering the camps, in line with the Prime Ministerial Directive of 3 April 2017.
- For so long as armed actors do operate in IDP camps, take the following immediate steps:
  - Ensure that armed actors are not allowed to enter IDP camps at night;
  - Ensure that the access of armed actors to IDP camps is monitored and regulated;
  - Put in place rotational postings for armed actors, with a specified time limit set at each camp;
  - Send a clear message of zero tolerance if armed actors commit acts of sexual violence including sexual exploitation.

#### ACCESS TO HUMANITARIAN AID

- Prevent armed actors from any involvement in the distribution of humanitarian aid in IDP camps and establish a mechanism to report any involvement of armed actors in distributions.

- Ensure that vulnerable groups, including women and children with perceived ties to IS, are not denied access to food, water, non-food items or health care in IDP camps.
- Ensure that distribution mechanisms used are appropriate and accessible to all displaced persons.
- Ensure that displaced persons have access to sufficient humanitarian aid to meet Iraq's minimum core obligations set out in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Also ensure that where certain groups of IDPs, such as female-headed households, have additional needs, they receive additional targeted assistance.
- Ensure efficient monitoring and the establishment of effective complaint mechanisms so that any denials of humanitarian aid are tracked, identified and addressed.
- Hold accountable any members of camp administrations or humanitarian actors who do not uphold their duty to provide humanitarian aid to all displaced persons equally and without discrimination.

#### **CIVIL DOCUMENTATION**

- Issue a public statement making clear that all Iraqi families have the legal right to obtain civil documentation regardless of their relatives' perceived affiliation with IS.
- Review internal intelligence procedures to remove existing obstacles to receiving documentation for families with perceived ties to IS.
- Ensure that families with perceived ties to IS are not threatened with arrest and/or legal repercussions for seeking to obtain new or replacement civil documents.
- Ensure, including through effective monitoring and oversight, that all staff working in Civil Status Directorate offices, including staff members and security officers, do not discriminate against or harass families applying for new or replacement documents or lawyers working on their behalf.
- Ensure that legal protection organizations can continue to provide power of attorney to IDPs rather than requesting their presence in person at Civil Status Directorate offices.
- End the use of formal or informal monthly quotas for humanitarian organizations providing legal services to families seeking new or replacement civil documents.
- Establish, and publicize among displaced persons, an "amnesty period", during which children can obtain birth certificates without undergoing security and background checks.
- Ensure that camp authorities allow the entry of all students into schools regardless of whether they have identity cards.

#### **FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT**

- Lift all arbitrary or discriminatory restrictions on the freedom of movement of displaced persons. Any movement restrictions that remain should be necessary, proportionate and non-discriminatory.
- Ensure that all those held in de facto detention in IDP camps are provided substantive and procedural safeguards guaranteed under international human rights and humanitarian law, so that they are not subject to indefinite and arbitrary detention and can effectively challenge the legality of their detention, including by bringing proceedings before a court.
- Ensure that camp authorities return all civil documents that have been confiscated from displaced persons and allow all displaced persons to enter and exit camps as they so choose.
- During upcoming efforts to consolidate and close IDP camps, prohibit camp authorities from seizing civil documents during the transfer of IDPs between camps, or from one sector of a camp to another.
- Allow and facilitate the voluntary and safe return of those forcibly displaced from their homes, and establish transparent processes to inform displaced residents of the access and damage status of their villages.

#### **SEXUAL VIOLENCE INCLUDING RAPE AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

- Hold all perpetrators of sexual violence, including rape and exploitation, accountable through effective investigation and, where sufficient admissible evidence of criminal wrongdoing is found, prosecution of suspects in fair trials and without the possibility of the death penalty.
- Request the assistance of UN agencies and other multilateral organizations, including the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN



High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Population Fund, the Protection Cluster, the Gender-Based Violence Sub-Cluster, the Iraq Network for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA network) and the Real Time Accountability Partnership (RTAP), to:

- Support the development and implementation of initiatives to address sexual violence, including by addressing factors that increase the risks faced by certain groups of women, including female-headed households associated with IS;
  - In co-ordination with the Ministry for Migration and Displacement, carry out regular trainings for camp authorities and other humanitarian actors on gender sensitivity and the prevention of sexual violence, including rape and exploitation, and send a clear message of zero tolerance for sexual violence;
  - Ensure that camp authorities are aware of how to respond should they receive a report of sexual violence, including all existing referral pathways and services for victims of sexual violence;
  - Improve the capacity of law enforcement authorities to carry out survivor-centred investigations into incidents of sexual violence.
- Review camp layout and design for IDP camps that will remain in operation to take adequate account of the need for privacy and physical security and to ensure that the physical plan of the camp does not exacerbate problems of sexual violence and exploitation.
  - Facilitate the visas of humanitarian personnel in federal Iraq to allow international organizations and NGOs to meet critical gaps in expertise on women's health and sexual violence including rape and sexual exploitation.

#### **BLOCKS ON RETURNS**

- Issue a public statement making clear that all Iraqi families have the legal right to return to their places of origin or habitual residence regardless of their relatives' perceived affiliation with IS.
- Ensure that all Iraqi civilians are able to voluntarily return to their places of origin or habitual residence and do not face threats or harassment by Iraqi forces, tribal authorities, local authorities or militias.
- Ensure that actors at all levels of authority implement high-level directives to lift blocks on returns and other obstacles, formal and informal, which prevent the safe and voluntary return of displaced persons.
- Support tribal reconciliation and ensure that discussions on IDP returns incorporate tribal elements, and discourage tribal authorities from imposing discriminatory orders or agreements that block the return of families with perceived IS ties.
- Ensure that Iraqi forces, including the PMU, as well as tribal and local authorities do not carry out house demolitions.
- Carry out investigations into the destruction of homes and other infrastructure and hold all perpetrators accountable.
- In any discussions on reconciliation and returns, ensure that all relevant actors are involved, including community activists, religious leaders, displaced persons themselves and others.
- Ensure restitution of returnees' homes and property or, where this is not possible, adequate compensation for losses is provided.
- For IDPs who are unwilling or unable to return, uphold their right to seek alternate solutions to their displacement, including by facilitating their integration or relocation in another area of Iraq.

## **TO THE OFFICE OF THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE UN ASSISTANCE MISSION FOR IRAQ**

- Publicly acknowledge the massive scale of arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances carried out by Iraqi forces, including the PMU, and urge the Iraqi government to end these systematic practices and hold all perpetrators accountable.

- Earmark funding and resources to ensure that enforced disappearances carried out after 2014 are systematically documented.
- Ensure that the Human Rights Office of the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights are operational and able to conduct field visits to IDP camps and other areas, so that they are able to document cases of enforced disappearances as well as other serious human rights abuses.
- Carry out a consultation with women with perceived ties to IS living in IDP camps to establish their priorities and urgent needs, as well as what interventions could improve their conditions. Such a consultation should ensure that the women's safety and anonymity is guaranteed and measures are taken to guard against any adverse repercussions.

## **TO UN AGENCIES, INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING IN IRAQ, AND INTERNATIONAL DONORS**

- Urge the Iraqi government to prevent all armed actors, including security guards, military and militia personnel from entering IDP camps.
- Make greater efforts to monitor and assess the humanitarian conditions of women and children at risk, including those perceived to be affiliated with IS, and establish mechanisms to monitor their treatment by camp authorities and their non-discriminatory access to humanitarian aid. Ensure that any such assessments are carried out in a sensitive manner that respects the preferences of these women and children.
- Closely monitor distributions of humanitarian aid to ensure that access is being determined according to need and without discrimination.
- Establish programming that provides income-generating activities and livelihood opportunities for female-headed families, targeting the most marginalized, such as women with perceived ties to IS.
- Advocate with camp authorities to allow the entry of all students into schools in or nearby IDP camps, regardless of whether they have identity cards.
- Form a steering committee to ensure that all activities around sexual violence, including sexual exploitation, are co-ordinated and effective. Such a committee should be comprised of representatives from the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the UN Population Fund, the Protection Cluster, the Gender-Based Violence Sub-Cluster, the Iraq Network for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA Network) and the Real Time Accountability Partnership (RTAP), as well as relevant humanitarian and human rights organizations.
- Improve complaint mechanisms for reporting incidents of sexual violence, including rape and sexual exploitation:
  - Raise awareness among displaced persons that incidents of sexual violence, including sexual exploitation, committed by any actor may be reported to the hot line operated by the IDP Information Centre.
  - Ensure that this hot line continues to be adequately staffed with personnel who have received training on responding to complaints of sexual violence including sexual exploitation.
  - Ensure that any other hot line or complaint mechanisms in place have staff trained on responding safely and confidentially to cases of sexual violence, including rape and sexual exploitation, and that these staff members are aware of all referral pathways and services available for victims of sexual violence.
  - The Gender-Based Violence Sub-Cluster, in close co-operation with the IDP Information Centre and the PSEA Network, should establish a centralized body to systematically track and monitor all incidents of sexual violence, including exploitation, and share all non-confidential data with relevant actors.

- Based on information gathered through this systematic monitoring – as well as on dialogue with managers of camps in which incidents of sexual violence and exploitation are less prevalent – the Gender-Based Violence Sub-Cluster, in partnership with the PSEA Network, should establish best practices for the prevention of sexual violence, including sexual exploitation, in IDP camps in Iraq.
- Ensure that the PSEA Network, in partnership with the Gender-Based Violence Sub-Cluster and the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster and in co-operation with the Iraqi authorities and the Ministry for Migration and Displacement, continues to carry out regular trainings for camp authorities and other humanitarian actors on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. Complementary trainings should be carried out by the Gender-Based Violence Sub-Cluster on the prevention of sexual violence. Funds should be earmarked so that staffing levels remain adequate and that trainings are offered regularly in camps in all areas of Iraq.
- Recruit a greater number of specialists in sexual and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and provide essential training and capacity building to local partners and camp administrations on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation.
- Earmark funds to train all members of camp administrations as well as staff members of humanitarian organizations on the prevention of sexual violence as well as sexual exploitation.
- Institute a rigorous vetting procedure to prevent anyone accused of sexual violence, including rape and sexual exploitation, being appointed to work with displaced women and children.
- Ensure that all agencies and humanitarian organizations have robust systems in place to prevent sexual violence.
- Earmark funding for women’s health issues in IDP camps, including specialists who are able to ensure the adequate provision of sexual and reproductive health services and access to information on sexual and reproductive health, and who can raise awareness on women’s health issues.
- Support the government of Iraq to develop an implementation plan for achieving alternative durable solutions for displaced persons who are unable or unwilling to return, in line with Iraq’s National Policy on Displacement.
- Assess and publicly report data on the number of displaced persons who are unable or unwilling to return in order to support the government in facilitating their access to alternative durable solutions.

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL  
IS A GLOBAL MOVEMENT  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.  
WHEN INJUSTICE HAPPENS  
TO ONE PERSON, IT  
MATTERS TO US ALL.**

#### CONTACT US



[info@amnesty.org](mailto:info@amnesty.org)



+44 (0)20 7413 5500

#### JOIN THE CONVERSATION



[www.facebook.com/AmnestyGlobal](http://www.facebook.com/AmnestyGlobal)



[@Amnesty](https://twitter.com/Amnesty)

# THE CONDEMNED

## WOMEN AND CHILDREN ISOLATED, TRAPPED AND EXPLOITED IN IRAQ

Territorial armed conflict involving the armed group Islamic State (IS) in Iraq has come to an end, but the suffering of Iraqis has not. Thousands of Iraqi women and children with perceived IS ties have been condemned for crimes they did not commit. They are being punished for factors outside of their control – such as being related, however distantly, to men who were somehow involved with IS. In IDP camps across Iraq, they are denied food, water and health care and prevented from returning home. Many have been subjected to sexual harassment, rape and sexual exploitation. This treatment has left these families with a deep sense of injustice.

Amnesty International's research shows that women and children with perceived ties to IS have been subjected to serious human rights violations and collective punishment.

Amnesty International calls on the Iraqi authorities to make it clear to all perpetrators that violations committed against women and children with perceived IS ties will not be tolerated. "Victory" over IS cannot be understood in only military terms. To end the cycles of mistreatment, marginalization and resulting communal violence and abuses, the Iraqi government and international community must commit to protecting the rights of all Iraqis.