

Technology Integration Division

November 2011



DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER

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## Chapter 1 Profile

### Introduction

Iraqi culture, one of the world's most ancient, is experiencing a tumultuous transition. After a long history of Ottoman rule, British colonialism, Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, and U.S./coalition occupation, Iraqis are struggling to determine their own political future. In December 2005, the Iraqi people voted in free elections, signaling Iraq's change from military dictatorship toward a parliamentary democracy. The second parliamentary election in March 2010 was the most open and competitive in the country's history, but resulted in months of deadlock and an inability to form a government. Parliament finally approved a new government under Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki in December 2010.<sup>1</sup>



© James Sherrill  
Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki

Power-sharing occurs along ethnic and religious lines, dividing the country. Sunnis affiliated with the Ba'athist political party ruled under Saddam Hussein, leaving deep political divisions between Sunnis and Shi'ites.<sup>2</sup> Since the fall of Hussein's regime, disenfranchised Ba'athists and other sectarian groups have maneuvered for power in part by violently exploiting the Shi'a–Sunnite split. Within Iraq's new democracy, the strategic goal of political reconciliation that represents security, stability, and peace to the people of Iraq remains a plausible but distant objective.

### Geography

#### Area

Iraq is situated at the northern end of the Persian Gulf. Iran lies to its east, Syria and Jordan to its west, Turkey to its north, and Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to its south. Iraq's total border is 3,650 km (2,268 mi). It has a 58-km (36-mi) coastline on the Persian Gulf, its only access to the world's oceans. Iraq's area is approximately equivalent to that of California's.<sup>3</sup>



© Damon Taylor  
Arabian peninsula map

#### Geographic Divisions

Iraq contains roughly four major geographic divisions. Its west and southwestern region consists of a flat, stony, and sandy extension of the Syrian Desert. Second, a rolling upland spreads

<sup>1</sup> Voice of America, "Iraqi Parliament Approves New Maliki Government." 21 December 2010, <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/Iraqi-Parliament-Approves-New-Government-112244804.html>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Iraq: People," 8 March 2010., <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6804.htm>

<sup>3</sup> CIA World Factbook, "Iraq: Geography," 08 February 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

through northern Iraq between the upper Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. It starts about 120 km (75 mi) north of Baghdad and extends to the Syrian border. This region is a mix of desert and deep river valleys. The third geographical division includes mountainous highlands in the north and northeast, which extend into Iran and Turkey. Last, an alluvial plain that begins north of Baghdad sweeps southward along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers through the central and southeastern sections of the country.<sup>4</sup>

### Topographic Features

Mount Haji Ibrahim, or Gundah Zhur, was once believed to be the highest peak in Iraq, reaching 3,607 m (11,837 ft). However, the Unnamed Peak nearby is higher at 3,611 m (11,849 ft). These mountains are an extension of the Zagros Mountains in western Iran.



© ninara / flickr.com  
Zagros mountains

The mountainous region of Iraq begins just southwest of Mosul and Kirkuk and extends to the borders of Iran and Turkey. Elevations range from 1,000 m–4,000 m (3,000 ft–12,000 ft). The Iraqi Marshlands extend from central Iraq toward the lower portions of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers where the two rivers join. The floodplain wetlands have enabled the cultivation of rice and other agricultural products in the area for millennia. Manmade lakes in the vicinity of Baghdad include Lake Tharthar, which receives overflow from the Tigris River; and Lakes Habbaniyah and Razazah, which relieve the floodwaters from the Euphrates River. These lakes were created to fight flooding.<sup>5</sup>

### Climate

Iraq has a mostly desert climate with hot, dry summers and mild winters. In the northeastern mountains, winters are cold and occasionally bring heavy snowfall. Temperatures in the north and west range from 0 to 15°C (32 to 59°F) in winter and 22 to 38°C (71.6 to 100.4°F) in summer. In areas south of Baghdad, temperatures range from 4 to 17°C (39.2 to 62.6°F) in the winter and from 29 to 43°C (84.2 to 109.4°F) in summer.<sup>6</sup>



© Brendon Connelly  
Sandstorm in Falluja

The country receives 90 percent of its rain between November and April. Average annual rainfall nationwide is 10–17 cm (4–7 in). The northern and northeastern uplands receive

<sup>4</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Iraq,” August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> CIA World Factbook, “Iraq: Geography,” 08 February 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>6</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Iraq,” August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

roughly three times that amount, and in the mountains rainfall may be as much as 100 cm (40 in). Rain in the uplands works its way slowly downriver to the Persian Gulf.<sup>7</sup>

Dust and sandstorms occur because of the *sharqi* winds.<sup>8</sup> These destructive storms carrying walls of debris, dust, and dirt can occur at any time of year, but the peak of the sandstorm season is July.<sup>9</sup> Iraq's sandstorms are strong enough to disable the engines of machinery and aircraft and reduce visibility to almost zero.

### Rivers

Iraq's great rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, helped make agriculture very rewarding in Mesopotamia. The slow-flowing rivers carry a lot of silt, deposited over millennia on farms along the way by spring floods that produced some of the most fertile land in the world. Maximum flow periods for the Tigris are from March to May, with two-fifths of the annual flow occurring then.<sup>10</sup> The Euphrates begins in Turkey, and the Tigris begins in Turkish Armenia. The rivers flow more than 2,500 km (1,553 mi) in a southward direction through Iraq, meeting just north of Baṣrah. Here they form the Shatt al-Arab waterway that flows into the Persian Gulf at Al-Faw on the Iranian border.<sup>11</sup>



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Tigris River, irrigated farms

Iraqis have built dams for flood control and for irrigation, and constructed canals to move water where it is most needed. One canal connects the Tigris near Samarra with Buhayrat al-Tharthar (Lake Tharthar). A second canal connects the lake to the Euphrates at al-Habbaniyyah. In 1990, Syria and Iraq agreed to share the waters of the Euphrates equitably, and Turkey has promised an annual minimum flow where it shares a border with Syria. There is no three-party agreement.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Iraq," August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> *Sharqi* literally means "eastern."

<sup>9</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Iraq: Climate," 2007, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22930>

<sup>10</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Iraq: The Tigris-Euphrates River System," 2007, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-232256>

<sup>11</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Iraq," August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Iraq: Irrigation and Canals." 2007, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-232257>

## Draining of the Marshlands

One project begun by Saddam Hussein after the Persian Gulf War was the punitive destruction of the marshland homes of Marsh Arabs (*Ma'dan*) because they had opposed Iraqi government forces during the war. Hussein's administration built canals to divert the river waters that sustained the wetlands, thus draining them and turning them into dry salt flats.<sup>13</sup> This led to the extinction of various species of plants and animals, and displaced the Marsh Arabs, who had depended on the marshes for around 5,000 years. The destruction of the "largest wetlands in western Asia and one of the largest in the world," has adversely affected the entire surrounding ecosystem.<sup>14</sup>



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Marsh, northern Iraq

Marsh restoration efforts since the fall of the Hussein regime have opened floodgates and breached embankments, leading to some rebirth of the old marshlands. Dam-building, drought, and dumping raw sewage into waterways threaten these restoration efforts, and so the marshlands' future remains uncertain.<sup>15</sup>

## Environment

### *Damage to Biodiversity and Environment from War*

Iraq suffered significant environmental degradation due to wars in 1980–88, 1991, and from 2003 to present. Billions of gallons of crude oil that spilled into the Persian Gulf severely polluted the coast and harmed local ecosystems. Oil wells set on fire after the Gulf War spread toxic smoke hundreds of miles across the region, affecting people, wildlife, and the environment. The destruction of chemical facilities and the prevalence of waste products, including depleted uranium shells, dispersed more toxins into the air, soil, and water of the entire region.<sup>16</sup>



DoD Image / Jim Gordan  
Oil Refinery

<sup>13</sup> Ernesto Londono, "Surviving, But Hardly Thriving: Water Has Returned to Iraq's Marshes, but Their Revival Remains in Doubt," *The Washington Post*, 24 July 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2009/07/23/ST2009072303928.html?sid=ST2009072303928>

<sup>14</sup> Joseph W Dellapenna, "The Iraqi Campaign Against the Marsh Arabs: Ecocide as Genocide," *Jurist*, 31 January 2003, <http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/forum/forumnew92.php>

<sup>15</sup> Jim Muir, "Iraq Marshes Face Grave New Threat," BBC News, 24 February 2009, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7906512.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7906512.stm)

<sup>16</sup> K. P. McManus, "Civil Liability for Wartime Environmental Damage: Adapting the United Nations Compensation Commission for the Iraq War," *Boston College Environmental Affairs Law Review* 33, 2 (2006), 417-448, [http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/schools/law/lawreviews/journals/bcealr/33\\_2/ealr\\_33\\_2\\_web.pdf](http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/schools/law/lawreviews/journals/bcealr/33_2/ealr_33_2_web.pdf)

## Major Cities

### *Baghdad*

The capital of Iraq, Baghdad, was founded by the Abbasids in 762 C.E. The city straddles the banks of the Tigris River, with 11 bridges connecting the 2 sides. With 6.2 million inhabitants according to a 2007 census, it is the largest city in Iraq today and the center of industry, commerce, and culture.<sup>17</sup>



© Robert Smith  
Baghdad, Iraq

### *Mosul*

With 1.4 million inhabitants (2009 estimate), Mosul is Iraq's second-largest city.<sup>18</sup> Early on, Mosul was a center of trade lying strategically along the caravan route between the Mediterranean, India, and Persia.<sup>19</sup> Today, Mosul is northern Iraq's industrial center as well as a major trade and communications center.<sup>20</sup> Its mostly Kurdish population lives together with the largest Christian community in Iraq, the Chaldeans.

### *Basrah*

Basrah is Iraq's third-largest city, with a population of 1.2 million (2009 estimate).<sup>21</sup> It is also Iraq's main port. The city's rich history dates back to the Abbasids (750–1258 C.E.).<sup>22</sup>

### *Karbala*

The holy city of Karbala is the site of Husayn ibn Ali the martyr's tomb. He was killed there in 680 C.E. during a battle over the split between Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims. After Mecca, Karbala is the place most visited by Shi'ite pilgrims and has developed into a major center of Islamic religion.



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Karbala, Iraq

### *Kirkuk*

Kirkuk's ancient history dates back over 5,000 years. Kurds and Turkmen make up most of its population. Kirkuk has been the center of the petroleum industry since the 1930s, producing one million barrels of oil daily. It is a major industrial and agricultural center.

<sup>17</sup> Citypopulation, "Iraq," 17 January 2010, <http://www.citypopulation.de/Iraq.html>

<sup>18</sup> Citypopulation, "Iraq," 28 December 2010, <http://www.citypopulation.de/Iraq.html>

<sup>19</sup> Global Security, Military, "Mosul," 22 June 2005, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/mosul.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Atlas Tours, Iraq, "Mosul, Iraq," 2008, <http://www.atlastours.net/iraq/mosul.html>

<sup>21</sup> Citypopulation, "Iraq," 28 December 2010, <http://www.citypopulation.de/Iraq.html>

<sup>22</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Abbasid Dynasty," accessed 4 Feb 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/465/Abbasid-Dynasty>

## *Erbil*

One of the world's longest continuously inhabited cities, Erbil's roots date back over 8,000 years. Close to Turkey and Iran, it represents the center of the Kurdish independence movement.<sup>23</sup>

## **Pre-Modern History**

### *Ancient History*

Known as the "Fertile Crescent," the rich floodplains between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers became one of the world's central areas of agricultural production more than 10,000 years ago.<sup>24</sup> Sumerian civilization emerged around 3000 B.C.E. in what is called Mesopotamia, or the land "between two rivers."<sup>25</sup> The Sumerians created a civilization characterized by urban culture and highly developed religious and ethical views, architecture, and art. The cuneiform script (written on clay) evolved out of the Sumerian language and remained in use for thousands of years.<sup>26, 27</sup>



© Hardnfast / Wikimedia.org  
Ancient ziggurat, Ali Air Base

### *Islamic Empires*

In the mid-7th century C.E., Arab armies swept into Qadisiyya south of Baghdad bringing with them the religion of Islam. While the first Arab-Muslim empire, the Umayyad Dynasty, emerged from Damascus, the second and much longer lasting Abbasid Dynasty had its center in Baghdad from the middle of the 8th century until 1258 C.E.<sup>28, 29</sup> During this time, Baghdad developed into the world's second-largest city, surpassed in size only by Constantinople. It was also a center of culture, arts, and science. The Abbasids ruled the Middle East for half a millennium, until the Mongols arrived during the 13th century destroying Baghdad and everything in their path.

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<sup>23</sup> Citypopulation, "Iraq," 17 January 2010, <http://www.citypopulation.de/Iraq.html>

<sup>24</sup> UNEP, United Nations Environmental Programme, WCMC, "Conflict and the Environment in Iraq," n. d., [http://www.unep-wcmc.org/latenews/Iraq\\_2003/biodiversity.htm](http://www.unep-wcmc.org/latenews/Iraq_2003/biodiversity.htm)

<sup>25</sup> The British Museum, "Mesopotamia – Geography," 8 Feb 2011, [http://www.mesopotamia.co.uk/geography/home\\_set.html](http://www.mesopotamia.co.uk/geography/home_set.html)

<sup>26</sup> AncientScripts, "Sumerian," 2010, <http://www.ancientscripts.com/sumerian.html>

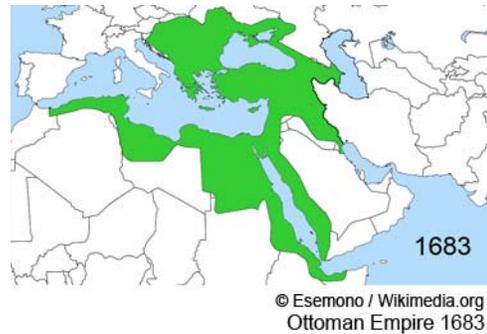
<sup>27</sup> Omniglot, "Akkadian Cuneiform," 1998-2011, <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/akkadian.htm>

<sup>28</sup> Religion Facts, Islam, "Timeline of Islam," 2004-2011, <http://www.religionfacts.com/islam/timeline.htm>

<sup>29</sup> WorldTimelines, "Western Asia," 2005, <http://www.worldtimelines.org.uk/world/asia/western/AD622-1258>

### *The Ottoman Empire and the British*

The Ottoman Empire ruled Iraq for almost four centuries, from the 16th century until 1920.<sup>30</sup> In the mid-1800s, Britain became interested in Iraq for its value as a direct overland route to India. The British set up treaties with Arab tribal chieftains and gained the right to explore oil fields in nearby Iran, forming the Anglo-Persian Oil Company in 1909.



Ottoman and British forces fought in Iraq during World War I and the British occupied most of the country in 1917. The British had promised independence if the uprising against the Ottomans was successful, but instead Iraq became a British territory under the mandate of the League of Nations. The Iraqi Arabs rebelled against the British who fought back by bombing the country, killing around 9,000 people.<sup>31</sup> The British decided that ruling Iraq indirectly through a provisional government could work better than direct rule. Iraq would be a kingdom, governed by a council of Arab officials supervised by the British High Commissioner. The British supported the ascension of Faisal ibn Hussein as Iraq's king. Faisal's family had long been the stewards of Mecca but was displaced following World War I by the Saud family. Once in Iraq, Faisal built a base of power by negotiating with the various tribal leaders. Faisal's foreign origins and ultimate loyalty to the British undercut his legitimacy as a ruler.<sup>32</sup>

Independence finally came to Iraq in 1932, but brought neither stability nor tranquility. Sunni Arabs had become the dominating force in the army and government, and ongoing problems stemmed from the Sunni-Shi'a split and factionalism. Tribalism and arbitrary borders also tended to fragment the country.<sup>33</sup> Since its beginnings as a sovereign republic, Iraq has been chronically plagued by coups and wars.

### **Recent History**

In 1979 Saddam Hussein took power as head of the socialist Ba'ath Party and became president of Iraq. In 1980, with support from the United States and neighboring Arab states, Hussein launched a costly eight-year war with Iran, ending in a stalemate and with extensive loss to life and resources.<sup>34</sup> Later in the same decade, he used poison gas to wipe out entire Kurdish towns and villages as the Kurds were pressing for autonomy. In 1990, Hussein attacked and occupied Kuwait, but was forced out by a U.S.-led international coalition; however, he remained in power in Iraq. Subsequently, Hussein

<sup>30</sup> Courtney Hunt, "The Ottoman Empire," and "The British Occupation," in *The History of Iraq. The Greenwood Histories of the Modern Nations* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), 52, 61.

<sup>31</sup> Jonathan Glancey, "Our Last Occupation," *The Guardian UK*, World News, 19 April 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/apr/19/iraq.arts>

<sup>32</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Iraq," August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Iraq," August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Iraq," August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

refused to cooperate with U.N. inspectors investigating a possible program of weapons of mass destruction. As a result, Iraq languished under U.N. sanctions throughout the 1990s. It was not until 2002 that Iraq finally agreed to unconditional arms inspections.<sup>35</sup>

### *Operation Iraqi Freedom*

In March 2003, the U.S. led a second coalition of nations in “Operation Iraqi Freedom,” which toppled Hussein’s dictatorial Ba’athist regime. The invasion was predicated on assertions that Iraq had supported the 2001 attacks against the United States and was concealing weapons of mass destruction, both allegations which have since proven to be largely incorrect.<sup>36</sup> The U.S. long-term goal has been to build a “strategic partnership” with the Iraqi government that will lead to a “democratic Iraq that can govern, defend, and sustain itself,” and be an ally in the region.<sup>37</sup> Saddam Hussein was put on trial after his capture and convicted of crimes against humanity by the Iraqi High Tribunal for his role in the deaths of 148 Shi’ites in 1982.<sup>38</sup> He was sentenced to death by hanging and was executed in late December 2006.<sup>39</sup>



© Amir Farshad Ebrahimi  
Saddam Hussein trial

### *Post-Saddam Iraq*

In January 2005, Iraq held a national election to choose members of an interim National Assembly charged with drafting a permanent constitution. The draft constitution was approved in October 2005 by a slim margin of Iraqi voters. Two months later, voters elected a permanent parliament that finalized many of the remaining constitutional details. Intense debate followed about how to fairly distribute power among the different political groups in Iraq, culminating in approval of a permanent government led by Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki.

Although Maliki’s Shi’ite-led government made efforts toward political reconciliation, progress has been uneven. Many Sunni Arabs were dissatisfied with losing their Hussein-era positions of privilege, and felt alienated by a foreign occupation. As a result, Sunnis chose to boycott the elections, which ushered in a disproportionate number of Kurdish and Shi’ite Arab political representatives. This resulted in a period of legislative gridlock.

<sup>35</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Iraq,” August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Dr. John Prados, ed., “U.S. Intelligence and Iraq WMD,” National Security Archive, August 2008, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB254/index.htm>

<sup>37</sup> John T. Wooley and Gerhard Peters, “George W. Bush,” *The American Presidency Project*, 1999–2010, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25594>

<sup>38</sup> Case Western Reserve Law School, “Translated Indictment of Saddam Hussein,” 15 May 2006, [http://law.case.edu/saddamtrial/documents/20060515\\_indictment\\_trans\\_saddam\\_hussein.pdf](http://law.case.edu/saddamtrial/documents/20060515_indictment_trans_saddam_hussein.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> NBC News, “Saddam Hussein Executed,” *MSNBC*, 30 December 2006, [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/16389128/ns/world\\_news-mideast/n\\_africa/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/16389128/ns/world_news-mideast/n_africa/)

It also produced a period of deadly sectarian violence that primarily targeted civilians and blocked reconstruction of the country's infrastructure.<sup>40</sup>

By 2007, a U.S.-led troop "surge," together with Sunni tribal alliances in central Iraq (known as the "Sunni Awakening"), brought about a dramatic reduction in violence.<sup>41</sup>

During the provincial elections in the spring of 2009, Sunnis returned to the polls and, with fellow Iraqi voters, helped elect a more representative body politic. To promote security and stability in Iraq's urban areas, a transfer of authority from United States and coalition forces to the Iraqi government followed the 2009 elections. On 7 March 2010, Iraqi national elections were held with more than 60 percent of eligible Iraqis turning out to vote.<sup>42</sup>



© DVIDSHUB / flickr.com  
Iraqi woman votes in Nasiriyah

The election results set the stage for the withdrawal of U.S. and coalition forces, and raise hopes that a democratic Iraq can evolve into a peaceful, multiethnic society. At the same time, the new Iraqi government will need votes of confidence from multiple coalitions and ethnic groups to gain a ruling majority in Parliament.<sup>43</sup> In 2010, the U.S. government began drawing down its troop presence in Iraq. By late August, all major combat units had been removed, leaving 50,000 U.S. troops to assist Iraqis for training purposes and as needed in other areas. In August 2010, Barack Obama announced the end of U.S. combat missions in Iraq, leaving the Iraqi government in primary control of its military security.<sup>44, 45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Iraq," August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> "Initial Iraq Benchmark Assessment Report," *House Document no. 110-45, 110th Cong., 1st sess.* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2007), 4, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CDOC-110hdoc45/pdf/CDOC-110hdoc45.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> Leila Fadel, "Iraqi Officials Put Voter Turnout at 62 Percent," *The Washington Post*, 9 March 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/08/AR2010030801766.html>

<sup>43</sup> "Iraq Elections," *New York Times*, 10 September 2010, <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/iraq/elections/index.html>

<sup>44</sup> Adams, Richard, "Richard Adams's Blog: Barack Obama on the End of U.S. Combat Missions in Iraq – As It Happened," 31 August 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/richard-adams-blog/2010/aug/31/barack-obama-address-end-us-combat-missions-iraq>

<sup>45</sup> Aamer Madhani, "Withdrawal of U.S. Combat Forces is 'New Dawn' for Iraq," *USA Today*, 19 August 2010, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2010-08-20-iraq20\\_ST\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2010-08-20-iraq20_ST_N.htm)

## Economy

### Overview

Iraq's devastated economy and financial system, crippled by the Iran-Iraq War, the Persian Gulf War, and UN embargo, have yet to recover their 1980 levels, when Iraq's economy was the second-largest in the Arab world.<sup>46</sup> Since 2003 however, Iraq's oil-dominated economy has grown stronger in some areas.<sup>47</sup> A continuing influx of oil revenues and foreign grants has kept the economy afloat, despite the violent insurgency that caused over 2 million Iraqis to flee to neighboring countries.<sup>48</sup> Approximately 1.5 million people remain internally displaced as a result of sectarian violence.<sup>49</sup> Officially, unemployment falls between 15.2 and 18 percent, depending on sources, and the unofficial rate of unemployment is as high as 30 percent.<sup>50</sup> Inflation more than doubled from 2008 to 2009, reflecting that while some economic progress has been made, the lives of ordinary Iraqis remain largely unchanged.<sup>51</sup> Financial reforms to banking and the private sector are being implemented as part of the country's ongoing effort to rebuild.



© HYAKUNeko / flickr.com  
Iraqi Dinar

### The Oil Sector

Iraq has vast petroleum deposits, estimated to be 115 billion barrels (2009 est.) of proven reserves.<sup>52</sup> Some fields in western Iraq are untapped, leading to speculation that more reserves might be available; existing oil fields are located in the south and in the north along the country's eastern border. In the south, the oil exists mostly in areas populated by Shi'ite Iraqis. The cluster of oil fields in southeastern Iraq are the largest concentration of giant oil fields in the world, while northern Iraq contains about 20 percent of the nation's oil reserves with Mosul, Kirkuk, and Khanaqin as major sites.<sup>53</sup> Production has declined since the period just before the war.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Iraq: Economy: Overview," 2010, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22931>

<sup>47</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Iraq: Economy – Overview," in *The World Factbook*, 3 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>48</sup> AFP, "UN Agencies Launch 85 Mln Dollar Iraqi Refugee Appeal," 18 September 2007, <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5hzx2X7WSVklXJxuNpVKZx-5IKL5Q>

<sup>49</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Background Notes: Iraq: People," 8 March 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6804.htm>

<sup>50</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Iraq: Economy – Overview," in *The World Factbook*, 30 August 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>51</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Iraq: Economy – Overview," in *The World Factbook*, August 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>52</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Iraq," in *The World Factbook*, 3 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>53</sup> U.S. Energy Information Administration. International, "Iraq: Oil," September 2010, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Iraq/Oil.html>

<sup>54</sup> Reuters, "Iraq Oil Law a Priority, PM Hopeful Allawi Says," 30 August 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSLDE62U1CO20100331>

Providing over 80 percent of the country's foreign exchange earnings, Iraq generally depends on the sale of crude oil for its revenue.<sup>55</sup> Because this does not meet internal demand, Iraq must import about a quarter of its petroleum.<sup>56</sup> New refineries are being built, and considerable reconstruction aid from the United States has been committed toward the repair and modernization of Iraq's existing oil infrastructure, but the level of violence in Iraq continues to influence oil production.<sup>57, 58</sup>

Although parliament approved a new law to allow foreign companies to both build and operate refineries in Iraq back in 2007, key legislation has yet to be passed by the new government, outlining the distribution of oil resources and revenues to the Iraqi people.<sup>59</sup>

### *The Agricultural Sector*

After oil, agriculture is the second-largest economic sector in Iraq and the second-largest source of jobs. It has traditionally provided one-fourth to one-third of the Iraqi GDP, but today accounts for only around 12 percent of GDP.<sup>60, 61</sup> Much of Iraq's arable land lies in the northern and northeastern parts of the country where crops such as wheat and barley are rain-fed.<sup>62</sup> Other important agricultural crops are rice, cotton, dates, and vegetables, while sheep and cattle are the main livestock.<sup>63</sup>



© The U.S. Army / flickr.com  
Grand Canal, Baghdad

The sector has historically faced many challenges, including lack of investments, poor infrastructure, inadequate or outdated technology, and conditions such as soil salinity and drought.<sup>64, 65</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Iraq," in *The World Factbook*, 03 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>56</sup> U.S. Energy Information Administration, International, "Iraq: Oil," September 2010, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Iraq/Oil.html>

<sup>57</sup> Congressional Research Service, Blanchard, Christopher M., "Iraq: Oil and Gas Legislation, Revenue Sharing, and U.S. Policy [p. 4]," 3 November 2009, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL34064.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> "Iraq: The Awakening of an Economic Giant," *Financial Times*, in Middle East: Economy, 15 September 2010. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/9208ae8a-c0e4-11df-99c4-00144feab49a.html>

<sup>59</sup> "UPDATE 1- Iraq to Ask Firms to Build \$2.5 Bln Oil Refinery," Reuters, 22 March 2009. <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL68139020090322>

<sup>60</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Iraq: Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing," 2007, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22931>

<sup>61</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. "Iraq." 8 March 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6804.htm#econ>

<sup>62</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Iraq: Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing," 2007, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22931>

<sup>63</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Iraq," August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, "Rebuilding Agriculture and Food Security in Iraq," 8 September 2010, <http://www.fas.usda.gov/country/Iraq/development/iraq.asp>

<sup>65</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Iraq: Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing," 2007, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22931>

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Iraqi government have cooperated to encourage investment in Iraq's agricultural sector, and micro-loans (small, secured loans to help entrepreneurs establish credit) have presented opportunities to expand the family farm sector.<sup>66</sup>

### *The Services Sector*

This sector constituted 27.6 percent of Iraq's GDP in 2009.<sup>67</sup> A substantial percentage of service workers are employed by the government. One of the most prosperous sectors has been personal and institutional protection, surveillance, and other forms of security, with at least 60 companies providing those services. Iraqi tourism became virtually nonexistent after 2003 because of lack of security in the country.<sup>68</sup> A limited amount of tourism has returned, mainly to "religious and historically significant sites" as "relative calm" returns to some parts of Iraq, and plans are underway to develop more sites.<sup>69</sup>

Most of the current tourists are Iranians visiting Shi'ite religious sites such as the shrine of Imam Ali in Najaf. (Ali was the Prophet Muhammad's son-in-law and cousin.) While Saddam Hussein was the Iraqi leader, only Iraqi Shi'ites were allowed to visit. Now, Iranian pilgrims are increasingly traveling to Iraq to visit this and other important historical sites located in Shi'ite areas. To accommodate them, Gulf investors are investing in tourist infrastructure around Karbala and Najaf.<sup>70</sup>



© Arlo K. Abrahamson  
Masjid Ali, Najaf

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<sup>66</sup> Jim Fisher-Thompson, 2008 PRT News, "Iraqis 'Ambitious' to Upgrade Agricultural Sector," Embassy of the United States, Baghdad, Iraq, 12 March 2008, [http://iraq.usembassy.gov/prt\\_news\\_03122008.html](http://iraq.usembassy.gov/prt_news_03122008.html)

<sup>67</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Iraq," in *The World Factbook*, 3 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>68</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Iraq" August 2006 <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>69</sup> Mazin Faiq, "Tourism Slowly Returns to Iraq," ABC News, 9 November 2009, <http://abcnews.go.com/Travel/tourism-slowly-returns-iraq/story?id=9014710>

<sup>70</sup> Kelly McEvers, "Iran Asserts 'Soft Power' Influence in Iraq," VPR News. 3 August 2010. <http://www.vpr.net/npr/128941669/>

### *Rebuilding the Infrastructure*

Decades of conflict, wars, mismanagement, and misdirection of resources as well as Saddam Hussein's centralized command economy have taken a toll on Iraq's infrastructure. The effect has been to curtail the economic growth and development of the country. Before the mid-1980s, Iraq's infrastructure was among the best in the Middle East. By 2009, however, the International Reconstruction Fund Facility found that "most Iraqis have limited access to essential basic services, including electricity, water supply, sanitation, and refuse collection."<sup>71</sup> After years of reconstruction, the results are mixed. For instance, in the health sector only an estimated 7 physicians and 12.7 hospital beds are available for every 10,000 people, according to 2009 figures. The data is markedly better for primary care access, where 100 percent of the population reportedly has access to services.<sup>72</sup>



© Larisa Epatko  
Doctor at Fallujah Hospital

### *Telecommunications*

The telecommunication network in Iraq was also among the best in the Middle East before being damaged during the Persian Gulf War. The 2003 U.S.-led war in Iraq severely disrupted telecommunications throughout the country. Government efforts to rebuild communications infrastructure are in progress, and the mobile cellular telephone market has expanded rapidly.<sup>73</sup> Mobile technology is also increasingly used as a tool in banking, distance learning, medicine, and agriculture.<sup>74</sup>

### *Mass Media*

After the fall of Saddam Hussein and the end of fully state-controlled media in 2003, Iraqi broadcast and print media underwent considerable growth, leading to a greater variety of mass media outlets expressing diverse points of view.<sup>75, 76</sup> Nevertheless, the media in Iraq still face challenges in terms of both operations and security. Although freedom of opinion and freedom of the press are guaranteed by law, the government restricts media investigations of "corruption and abuses of power."<sup>77</sup> Journalists are still being arrested and detained for their work by the Iraqi security and government officials.

<sup>71</sup> The World Bank Group International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, "Iraq-Infrastructure." n.d., <http://www.irffi.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/IRFFI/0..contentMDK:20241710~hlPK:1285902~menuPK:497916~pagePK:64168627~piPK:64167475~theSitePK:491458,00.html>

<sup>72</sup> World Health Organization, "Country Profiles: Iraq: Human and Physical Resources Indicators Rate (R) per 10,000 Population," August 2010, <http://www.emro.who.int/emrinfo/index.aspx?Ctry=irq>

<sup>73</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Iraq," in *The World Factbook*, 3 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>74</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Remarks at the U.S.-Iraq Business and Investment Conference," 20 October 2009, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/10/130729.htm>

<sup>75</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Iraq: Government and Politics: Mass Media," August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>76</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Iraq: Communications," in *The World Factbook*, 30 August 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>77</sup> Freedom House, "Map of Press Freedom 2009: Iraq," 2009, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/pfs/372.pdf>

Most media outlets are private and “are financially dependent on or affiliated with ethnic, sectarian, or partisan groups,” a situation made worse by the security threats prevalent in the country.<sup>78</sup> In 2008, Iraq was still the most dangerous place for the press with at least 11 journalist fatalities in that year alone.<sup>79</sup> Between 2003 and 2009, 140 journalists and 51 media support workers were killed while working in Iraq.<sup>80, 81, 82</sup> They are targeted by insurgent groups and by Iraqi government officials who allegedly bribe journalists to report on their particular views. Attempts to undermine objective reporting have resulted in a media environment that offers differing viewpoints, but suffers from a lack of independent journalistic practices.<sup>83</sup>

### *Electricity*

Despite the billions of dollars spent on repairing power grids, as of 2010 Iraqis still received less electricity than when Saddam Hussein was in power.<sup>84, 85</sup> War damage, frequent insurgent attacks on electricity grids, and prioritizing the oil industry are to blame for limited availability of electricity.<sup>86</sup>



© Larisa Epatko  
Control room, Iraqi power station

### **Ethnic and Other Minority Groups**

In Iraq, individual identity tends to matter very little. For Arabs living there, tribal identity, ethnicity, and Islam have become the principal defining qualities.<sup>87</sup> Within the tribe, group loyalty is valued highly, and responsibility circulates through the entire group rather than concentrating in any one individual.

<sup>78</sup> Freedom House, “Map of Press Freedom 2009: Iraq,” 2009, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/pfs/372.pdf>

<sup>79</sup> Freedom House, “Map of Press Freedom 2009: Iraq,” 2009, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/pfs/372.pdf>

<sup>80</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists, Special Reports, “Iraq: Journalists in Danger,” 23 July 2008, <http://cpj.org/reports/2008/07/journalists-killed-in-iraq.php>

<sup>81</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists, Special Reports, “Iraq: Journalists in Danger,” 23 July 2008, <http://cpj.org/reports/2008/07/journalists-killed-in-iraq.php>

<sup>82</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists, Special Reports, “Iraq: Media Workers Killed,” 2003-2009. <http://cpj.org/reports/2008/02/media-workers-killed-in-iraq.php>

<sup>83</sup> Freedom House, “Map of Press Freedom 2009: Iraq,” 2009, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/pfs/372.pdf>

<sup>84</sup> UPI, Energy Resources, “Iraq Drives to Boost Oil Infrastructure,” 24 June 2010, [http://www.upi.com/Science\\_News/Resource-Wars/2010/06/24/Iraq-drives-to-boost-oil-infrastructure/UPI-39191277398727/](http://www.upi.com/Science_News/Resource-Wars/2010/06/24/Iraq-drives-to-boost-oil-infrastructure/UPI-39191277398727/)

<sup>85</sup> BBC News, Middle East, “Life in Iraq: Reconstruction.” n.d., [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/in\\_depth/post\\_saddam\\_iraq/html/1.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/in_depth/post_saddam_iraq/html/1.stm)

<sup>86</sup> UPI, Energy Resources, “Iraq Drives to Boost Oil Infrastructure,” 24 June 2010, [http://www.upi.com/Science\\_News/Resource-Wars/2010/06/24/Iraq-drives-to-boost-oil-infrastructure/UPI-39191277398727/](http://www.upi.com/Science_News/Resource-Wars/2010/06/24/Iraq-drives-to-boost-oil-infrastructure/UPI-39191277398727/)

<sup>87</sup> GlobalSecurity.org, “Societal Framework,” 2007, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/society.htm>

## *Kurds*

The Kurds, a non-Arab people concentrated in the northeastern areas of the country, make up 15 to 20 percent of the Iraqi population.<sup>88</sup> The Kurdish people inhabit a contiguous mountainous area encompassing parts of Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Armenia, and Syria—an area the Kurds call Kurdistan. Their cultural identity stems from living at the intersection of Turkic, Persian, and Arab cultures.<sup>89</sup> Traditionally nomads, the Kurds roamed freely and practiced their own culture and customs until the end of the Ottoman Empire in 1922 led to the creation of new nation states within their homeland. Despite nationalistic aspirations since then, Kurds have not been able to establish an independent Kurdish state and have suffered repression at the hands of their rulers in their adopted states.<sup>90</sup>



© Kurdistan Regional Government / Wikimedia.org  
Kurds in Kurdistan

The Kurds today, mostly Sunni Muslims, are a cohesive political group despite internal conflicts and years of suppression under Saddam Hussein.<sup>91</sup> Iraqi Kurds suffered harsh treatment, including a genocide campaign in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War during which Kurds had sided with Iran. Following the First Gulf War, the Kurds rebelled again, only to be repressed once more by Iraqi troops. Ironically, despite the imposition of no-fly zones in the north to protect the Kurds, a civil war broke out (1994-1998) between two Kurdish leaders. Massoud Barzani's tribal-based organization called the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Jalal Talabani's socialistic Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) both struggled for dominance of the three Kurdish Provinces in Iraq: Dohuk, Arbil, and Sulaymaniyah.<sup>92, 93</sup> After Saddam's downfall, the two parties put aside their differences.

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<sup>88</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Iraq," in *The World Factbook*, 3 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>89</sup> Global Security., "Kurdistan-Iraq," 25 June 2008.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/kurdistan-iraq.htm>

<sup>90</sup> Qassim Khidhir, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, "Mixed Fortunes of Yazidis in New Iraq," 14 January 2009, <http://www.iwpr.net/report-news/mixed-fortunes-yazidis-new-iraq>

<sup>91</sup> The Washington Post Online, "Who are the Kurds?," 1999, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/daily/feb99/kurdprofile.htm>

<sup>92</sup> Andrew Lee Butters, "New Kurdish Party Could Destabilize Northern Iraq," Time Magazine Online, 27 July 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1912983,00.html>

<sup>93</sup> Global Security, "Kurdistan-Iraq," 25 June 2008,

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/kurdistan-iraq.htm>

### *Marsh Arabs (Ma'dan)*

In southern Iraq, severe environmental damage has greatly reduced an original population of roughly 500,000 *Ma'dan*, or Marsh Arabs. For 5,000 years, dating back to Sumerian times, these people have lived on natural and man-made islands in southern Iraq.<sup>94</sup> They subsisted on fishing and raising water buffalo, lived in reed houses, and traveled in reed boats.<sup>95</sup> Their long-standing way of life first came under pressure from extensive damming of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, which reduced the flow of water to the marshes where the *Ma'dan* lived.<sup>96</sup> The worst damage occurred when Saddam Hussein's regime retaliated against them for their opposition during the Gulf War and drained the marshes.<sup>97</sup> As a result, the area rapidly turned into dry salt flats. Many of the Marsh Arabs have either gone deeper into the remaining marshes or have fled into Iran.



© Carrie Hritz  
Marsh village remains

### *Turkmen and Other Minority Groups*

Turkmen, along with other minority ethnic groups such as the Armenians and Assyrians account for approximately 5 percent of Iraq's population.<sup>98</sup> All of these minority groups live in the northeast. As of 2005, the Turkmen were considered Iraq's third-largest ethnic group after the Arabs and the Kurds.<sup>99</sup> Turkmen are mostly Sunni Muslims and live in villages, having given up their tribal organization some years ago.<sup>100</sup> They live in border regions close to Kurdish and Arab areas.

<sup>94</sup> Paula I. Nielson, "Marsh Arabs of Iraq," Middle Eastern History, 21 December 2009, [http://middleeasternhistory.suite101.com/article.cfm/marsh\\_arabs\\_of\\_iraq](http://middleeasternhistory.suite101.com/article.cfm/marsh_arabs_of_iraq)

<sup>95</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Center, The List, "Marshlands of Mesopotamia," 26 July 2010, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/1838/>

<sup>96</sup> Tim Radford, "Marsh Arab Civilisation Disappearing as Iraqi Wetlands are Drained," The Guardian UK, 19 May 2001, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,492986,00.html>

<sup>97</sup> Human Rights Watch, "The Iraqi Government Assault on Marsh Arabs: A Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper," January 2003, <http://www.hrw.org/background/mena/marsharabs1.htm>

<sup>98</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Iraq," in *The World Factbook*, 3 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>99</sup> Unrepresented Nations and People's Organization, "The Turkmen of Iraq: Underestimated, Marginalized, and Exposed to Assimilation Terminology," Working Group in Minorities, 2 June 2005, <http://www.unpo.org/article/2610>

<sup>100</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, Metz, Helen Chapin, ed., "Iraq: Other Minorities," 1988, <http://countrystudies.us/iraq/33.htm>

The Yazidis, another minority group, “are of Kurdish stock but are distinguished by their unique religious fusion of elements of paganism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Islam. They live in small and isolated groups, mostly in the Sinjar Mountains west of Mosul.”<sup>101</sup> For the Yazidis, the war in Iraq has been a mixed blessing: while it has brought greater opportunities than were available under Saddam Hussein; however, it has also made them the subject of insurgent attacks.<sup>102</sup>



© Jim Fitzgerald  
Turkmen girl in national dress

Minority groups often get caught in the deadly political crossfire raging in Iraq, and are sometimes directly targeted due to their religious and ethnic background. In August 2007 when a truck bombing probably conducted by Sunni militants in Nineveh killed over 300 Yazidis and wounded more than 700 others. The struggle for control, land, and resources continues to threaten Iraq’s hope and prospects for unity among its disparate ethnic and religious factions.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, Metz, Helen Chapin, ed., “Iraq: Other Minorities,” 1988, <http://countrystudies.us/iraq/33.htm>

<sup>102</sup> Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Khidhir, Qassim, “Mixed Fortunes of Yazidis in New Iraq,” 14 January 2009, <http://www.iwpr.net/report-news/mixed-fortunes-yazidis-new-iraq>

<sup>103</sup> Sam Dagher, “Minorities Trapped in Northern Iraq’s Maelstrom,” The New York Times Online, 15 August 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/16/world/middleeast/16khazna.html>

## Chapter 1 Assessment

1. Iraq has a mostly subtropical climate well-suited for citrus production.  
FALSE  
Iraq has a mostly desert climate with hot, dry summers and mild winters. In the northeastern mountains, winters are cold and occasionally bring heavy snowfalls.
2. Saddam Hussein's regime intentionally destroyed the southern marshlands, turning them into dry salt flats.  
TRUE  
One of the projects begun by Saddam Hussein after the Persian Gulf War was the punitive destruction of the marshland homes of the Marsh Arabs (*Ma'dan*) because they had opposed Iraqi government forces during the war.
3. Iraq is heavily forested and boasts a thriving timber industry.  
FALSE  
Only around 1.9% of Iraq is forested. Drought and exploitation for firewood are partially responsible for the situation.
4. Mosul, the second-largest city in Iraq, is the capital and economic center of the country.  
FALSE  
The capital of Iraq, Baghdad, straddles the banks of the Tigris River and is the center of industry, commerce, and culture.
5. Saddam Hussein pursued an eight-year war against Iran from 1980-1988.  
TRUE  
Shortly after seizing power, Hussein attacked the newly minted Islamic Republic of Iran. During this time he was a close U.S. ally.

## Chapter 2 Religion

### Introduction

Of Iraq's estimated 29 million people, nearly 97% belong to the Islamic faith. Sectarian dissent among Iraq's Muslim majority is extensive, fueled both by ethnicity and by Sunni-Shi'ite divisions linked to a history of Sunni Baathist-led political oppression during the Saddam Hussein era. These disagreements have been inflamed by the struggle over power sharing in post-Saddam Iraq.



© openDemocracy / flickr.com  
Saddam statue falls, June 2007

Iraqi Shi'ites, mostly Arabs with some Kurds and Turkmen, represent between 60 and 65% of Iraq's Muslim population. Sunnis comprise between 32 and 37%.<sup>104</sup> The Sunni population is further divided into Sunni Kurds (18–20%), Sunni Arabs (12–16%), and Sunni Turkmen.<sup>105</sup>

### History of Islam

#### *Under Muhammad's Leadership*

Islam dates to the 6th century C.E., when the Prophet Muhammad began to preach the teachings he said were revealed to him by God in the Saudi Arabia. Muhammad claimed that while he was meditating in the desert, the Archangel Gabriel visited him. Gabriel eventually revealed the Quran to him over the subsequent years. Muslims believe Muhammad was the messenger of Allah (God).



© Courtesy Wikimedia.org  
Depiction of Angel Gabriel

Muhammad died in 632 C.E. without a clear successor. Conflicting views among his followers about who should next lead Islam eventually led to a split between among the community of believers.

#### *Under Muhammad's Immediate Successors*

Some of Muhammad's followers claimed the community should choose a new leader from among the Prophet's trusted friends. Others believed the leadership should be hereditary and remain within the family of the Prophet. After Muhammad died, four of his close companions successively ruled the new Islamic community. The first caliph was

<sup>104</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Iraq," in *The World Factbook*, 12 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>105</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Iraq: International Religious Freedom Report 2009: Section I. Religions Demography," 26 October 2009, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127348.htm>

Muhammad's friend, Abu Bakr, followed by Umar, and then Uthman, who was assassinated by Muslims who believed he had failed in his leadership.<sup>106</sup>

The fourth caliph was Muhammad's son-in-law, Ali ibn Abu Talib, considered by Shi'ites to have been Muhammad's original chosen successor. Appointing a member of the Prophet's family as caliph reopened questions of succession to the Prophet. Ali fought to unify a fractured Muslim community, but was struck down by an assassin before that dream became a reality.

### *Schism*

Ali's first son, Hassan, ruled briefly as caliph before abdicating to Mu'awiya, his father's old nemesis.<sup>107</sup> In return for Hassan's loyalty, Mu'awiyah agreed to return control of succession to the Muslim community upon his death. Instead, he named his son Yazid as heir to the title of Caliph, directly contradicting the agreement and the Sunni principle that the office should not be hereditary.<sup>108</sup> Ali's second son,



© Abbas Al-Musavi  
Battle of Karbala

Husayn, led the charge against members of Yazid's army at the Battle of Karbala, 10 October 680 C.E. Yazid's larger force cut down Husayn and his followers. Husayn's martyrdom at Karbala solidified the schism between Sunni and Shi'a Islam, and became a focal point for modern Shi'ites, who see themselves as oppressed fighters against privilege and power. Those who believed Ali to be the first legitimate ruler after the Prophet became Shi'ites.<sup>109, 110</sup> Those who recognized the first four Caliphs and their successors became Sunni Muslims.

## **Sunni and Shi'a Islam**

### *Sunnis*

Sunni Islam emerged as the majority branch of Islam and currently represents 87-90% of the worldwide Muslim community.<sup>111</sup> In countries where it has been the dominant religion, Sunni Islam has had a decentralized leadership and has been a large part of the legal, political, and economic systems.

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<sup>106</sup> Reza Aslan, *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam* (New York: Random House, 2006), 128.

<sup>107</sup> Frederick Mathewson Denny, *An Introduction to Islam* 2nd ed., (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1994), 92.

<sup>108</sup> Reza Aslan, *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam* (New York: Random House, 2006), 173-177.

<sup>109</sup> Mike Shuster, "The Origins of the Shia-Sunni Split," NPR, 12 February 2007, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7332087>

<sup>110</sup> Gordon D. Newby, *A Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2002), 25.

<sup>111</sup> The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Mapping the Global Muslim Population," 7 October 2009, <http://pewforum.org/Muslim/Mapping-the-Global-Muslim-Population%286%29.aspx>

Among Iraqi Sunnis, ethnic identity has historically been a greater influence on social unity or discord than theological belief. Many Iraqi Sunnis like to highlight their links to the Golden Age of Islamic civilization during the Abbasid caliphate between the 8th and 13th centuries. Centered in Baghdad, this empire blended Persian, Arabic, Egyptian, Greek, Eastern Roman, and other cultural traditions.



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Citadel of Hewlêr (Erbil)

### *Sunni Iraqi Kurds*

Iraqi Kurds, mostly Sunni, adopted Islam later than did the Arab world and approach it somewhat differently. Kurdish leaders have learned to leverage Islamic religious authority across divisions created by tribal loyalty. This use of centralized religious power is more often seen among adherents of Shi'a Islam.<sup>112</sup> Sunni Kurds have also been less accepting of the more conservative forms of Islam. In the minds of many Kurds, Saddam Hussein's repeated manipulation of religious symbolism and values in his campaigns of persecution against them undermined the link between strict Sunni Islam and Kurdish cultural identity.<sup>113, 114</sup> Moreover, some Kurds are Shi'ites but their Kurdish identity remains a binding factor.<sup>115</sup>

### *Shi'ites*

Following the deaths of Ali and his sons, Shi'a Islam quickly emerged as a separate and distinct sect within the Islamic world. Shi'ites are characterized by their devotion to Muhammad's bloodline, their rejection of the first three caliphs that preceded Ali, and their feeling that the leadership of the Islamic movement was stolen from them.<sup>116</sup> Shi'a Islam developed as a persecuted minority sect whose leaders stayed far away from the seat of the government.<sup>117</sup> Shi'ite teachings emphasized the spiritual and supernatural dimensions of Islam, while elevating the spiritual authority of its founders, heroes, and leaders. This caused Shi'a Islam to develop a highly spiritualized and centralized hierarchy of authority.<sup>118</sup>

Shi'a Islam differs from other forms of Islam in one other fundamental aspect: they believe that only the family of the Prophet could establish the rules, precedents, and

<sup>112</sup> Waleed Ibrahim, "Kurds to Join Shi'a Alliance: Talabani." Iol News, 15 April 2010.

<http://www.iol.co.za/news/world/kurds-to-join-shi-a-alliance-talabani-1,480746>

<sup>113</sup> Efraim Karsh and Rautsi Inari, *Saddam Hussein: A Political Biography* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 145.

<sup>114</sup> Sonia Alianak, *Middle Eastern Leaders and Islam: A Precarious Equilibrium* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 105-108.

<sup>115</sup> Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner, *The State, Religion and Ethnic Politics: Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 186-187.

<sup>116</sup> Sandra Mackey, *The Reckoning: Iraq and the Legacy of Saddam Hussein* (New York: Norton, 2003), 82.

<sup>117</sup> Nabîl Jabbûr, *The Rumbling Volcano: Islamic Fundamentalism in Egypt* (Pasadena, CA: Mandate Press, 1993), 53-54.

<sup>118</sup> Liyakatali Takim, *The Heirs of the Prophet: Charisma and Religious Authority in Shi'ite Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006).

traditions of Islam. Shi'ites reject practices established by the first three caliphs, which conversely are the main orthodox beliefs allowed by Sunnis. Sunnis believe the Quran and sayings of Muhammad cannot be changed, reinterpreted, or augmented by religious figures or individuals.

The importance of the imam in Shi'a Islam is considerably different than in other forms of Islam. Whereas Sunnis consider an imam to be merely a leader of prayers in the mosques, Shi'ites use the term to refer to a spiritual leader of the faith, from the bloodline of the Prophet.<sup>119</sup> They believe that there were a fixed number of such individuals and that they are "endowed with the living spirit of the Prophet and, as such, [are] thought to possess a spiritual authority that sets [them] above any earthly ruler."<sup>120</sup>



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Imam Hussein Shrine, Karbala

Shi'a Islam has identified holy sites and built shrines at the tombs of celebrated Shi'ite heroes. It revered the teachings and pronouncements of key leaders as nearly infallible. Over the years, there were many variations of Shi'ism, but today almost all of Iraq's Shi'ites are Twelvers (*Ithna Ashariyah*). They believe in twelve consecutive Imams and the occultation of the twelfth. In other words, the twelfth disappeared from view, but will someday reappear.<sup>121</sup>

### *Shi'a Iraqi Political Affiliations*

Today, Shi'a Islam within Iraq has a strong Persian influence and affiliation. This is due in part to the proximity of Iraq to Iran. Shi'ite Muslims have long moved back and forth between Iraq and Iran, where Shi'a Islam historically prospered and emerged as the main voice of Shi'ite authority in the 20th century.

In Iraq, Shi'a Islam has long had a numeric majority, but has been suppressed by the strong authority of Sunni and secular leaders. It is strengthened, however, by retaining its connection to the Shi'a population in neighboring countries. Shi'a leaders in Iraq not only have a sectarian affiliation with their Iranian neighbors, they also have recent examples of a Shi'ite's rise to political power in the person of current Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, Iran's



DoD Image / Jessica J. Wilkes  
Nouri al-Maliki

<sup>119</sup> Tore Kjeilen, "Imam," *LookLex* 2007, <http://lexicorient.com/e.o/imam.htm>

<sup>120</sup> Reza Aslan, *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam* (New York: Random House, 2006), 181.

<sup>121</sup> Gordon D. Newby, *A Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2002), 109-110.

<sup>122</sup> Edward A. Kolodziej and Roger E. Kanet, *From Superpower to Besieged Global Power: Restoring World Order after the Failure of the Bush Doctrine* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 305.

religious government has shown signs that it is ready to contribute to the success of the political ambitions of Iraq's Shi'ite leaders.

### Sufism

As Sunni Islam developed politically and legally, it addressed external concerns like community, military power, governance, and law. The leaders of Islam came from backgrounds as scholars, jurists, politicians, and military commanders. As such, Sunni Islam, as it evolved, became more legalistic, minimizing the emphasis on individual relationships with God. Sufi Muslims, the mystics of Islam, countered that trend by seeking direct communion with God.<sup>123</sup>



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Boy with Ali poster

The Sufis looked for a closer personal relationship with God through spiritual, often mystical, discipline. Sufism is practiced by several groups who emphasize different dimensions and rituals of the religion. Meditation, singing and dancing, and reciting prayers are some common ways Sufis express their beliefs.<sup>124</sup>

During the 8th and 9th centuries, Baghdad became a center for Islam's Sufi mystics. Within this vibrant city, Sufism offered an attractive alternative to the academic rigors of Sunni scholarship. It also offered a break from the divisive, worldly authority of Islamic politicians.<sup>125</sup>

Sufi Islam continues in Iraq despite occasional periods of persecution. It has remained particularly popular among Sunni Kurds in northern Iraq.<sup>126</sup> A Sufi shrine in Baghdad attracts pilgrims from around the world.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Frederick Mathewson Denny, *An Introduction to Islam* (New York: Macmillan, 1994), 219-242.

<sup>124</sup> GlobalSecurity.org. "Islam: Sufi Islam." 17 January 2010, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/intro/islam-sufi.htm>

<sup>125</sup> Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Years* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 1-37.

<sup>126</sup> The Jamestown Foundation, "Intra-Kurdish Disputes in Northern Iraq," 10 May 2007, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=4148](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=4148)

<sup>127</sup> Edward Wong, "Sufis Under Attack as Sunni Rifts Widen," *The New York Times* (21 August 2005), <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/21/international/middleeast/21sufis-web.html>

## The Pillars of Islam

One becomes a Muslim by reciting the *shahadah*, the Islamic declaration of faith, which is the first of five pillars of Islam. Newcomers to an Islamic country should be aware that the *shahadah* should never be repeated aloud by non-Muslims in the presence of strict Muslims, as this means a conversion to the Islamic faith. Once a Muslim, one is forbidden to leave Islam. The following is the *shahadah*:



© Basil D. Soufi  
Mecca, holiest site in Islam

*ash-hadu anna la ilaha illa allah, muhammad rasoul allah.*

I testify that there is no god but God (Allah); Muhammad is the messenger of God.

The other four pillars of Islam are prayer five times daily. They include *salat*; a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in one's lifetime, *hajj*; concern for and giving of alms to the poor, *zakat*; and the purification of one's body by fasting during Ramadan, called *sawm*.<sup>128</sup> Note that it is incorrect and insulting to call someone who has not made the pilgrimage a *hajji*. Many Shi'ites maintain that visits to Ali's burial site at An Najaf south of Baghdad and Husayn's shrine at Karbala carry the same weight as a pilgrimage to Mecca.

There are some minor outward differences between Sunni and Shi'ites. The practices of prayer differ only slightly in form. When Sunnis pray, they begin by standing up straight and placing their two hands on their abdomen. When Shi'as pray, they begin by standing up straight and keeping their two arms and hands straight down against their sides.

## Non-Islamic Religions

### *Christianity*

The Christian community in Iraq predates Islam in the region. Iraqi Christianity is perhaps more diverse than Christianity anywhere else in the world. Iraqi Christians represent all five of Christianity's major divisions: Assyrian, Oriental Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant. Thus, Christians in Iraq are not a monolithic group, and as such, suffer from a lack of group cohesion. Iraqi Christians are frequently victims of violence perpetuated by various Muslim sectarian groups.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>128</sup> Diversiton, "Traditions/Beliefs," n.d., <http://www.diversiton.com/religion/main/islam/traditions-beliefs.asp>

<sup>129</sup> Patrick Martin, "Iraqi Christians Suffer a Plague of Persecution," *The Globe and Mail*, 10 November 2010, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/africa-mideast/iraqi-christians-suffer-a-plague-of-persecution/article1794479/>

### *Yazidis*

The Yazidis are a religious community found primarily in northern Iraq and among the Kurds. Their faith combines elements of the various Abrahamic religions, Zoroastrianism, and Manichaeism. They practice endogamy [marriage within a particular group] and do not proselytize. While the exact number of Yazidis in Iraq varies drastically depending on the source from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands, they are a small community. However, they are frequent targets of sectarian violence.<sup>130</sup> Their main pilgrimage is to the tomb of Shaykh Adi ibn Musafir, whom the Yazidis believe to be an avatar of the angel Tawûsê Melek.<sup>131</sup> This tomb is located in the city of Laliş.



© Danpanic77 / Wikimedia.org  
Yezidi temple, northern Iraq

### *Mandaeism*

Determining the number of followers of Madaeism is difficult, given the persecution they have faced. Some are reluctant to self-identify, many have emigrated, and others have moved to the cities. However, it has been estimated that the total number is between 100,000 and 140,000, with the vast majority of these living in Iraq.<sup>132</sup> Their faith is another of the various syncretic religions found throughout the Middle East, combining elements of the various traditions, especially the Abrahamic faiths. Like other religious minorities, they have been persecuted.<sup>133</sup>

### **Role of Religion in the Government**

As adopted in 2005 the Iraqi Constitution specifies that Islamic law is a source of civil law, and no law can be enacted that contradicts Islam. Questions remain as to how this will play out in practice, since the Iraqi Constitution also provides for religious freedom. The government of Iraq is in transition, and many of the current tensions relate to the question of the role of religion in government. The Iraqi Constitution gives a glimpse into this state of governmental and religious transition. According to a report examining the state of religious freedom in Iraq, the nation's 2005 Constitution guarantees religious reform, but "religious minorities, particularly non-Muslims, remain under serious threat of violence..." in Iraq.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>130</sup> Nelida Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds: Yazidis in Colonial Iraq* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999).

<sup>131</sup> Eszter Spät, *The Yazidis* (London: Saqi, 2005), 54.

<sup>132</sup> E.S. Drower, *The Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran: Their Cults, Customs, Magic, Legends, and Folklore* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2002), i.

<sup>133</sup> Angus Crawford, "Iraq's Mandaeans 'face extinction,'" *BBC News* (04 March 2007),

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6412453.stm>

<sup>134</sup> The Institute on Religion and Public Policy, "Religious Freedom in the Republic of Iraq," 6 January 2010,

[http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session7/IQ/IRPP\\_UPR\\_IRO\\_S07\\_2010\\_TheInstituteonReligionandPublicPolicy.pdf](http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session7/IQ/IRPP_UPR_IRO_S07_2010_TheInstituteonReligionandPublicPolicy.pdf)

The government has not interfered with “formation of political parties based on religious beliefs or interpretations of religious doctrine.”<sup>135</sup> Although members of some religious minority communities hold senior government positions, employment discrimination still occurs in some ministries, based upon religious background.<sup>136</sup> Non-Muslim minorities seem to have greater difficulty finding representation in this current system.



© Tonyjeff / Wikimedia.org  
Iraq Coat of Arms

While the Iraqi government is less involved in religious affairs than the governments of other nearby countries, it does track religious affiliation. National identity cards state the religious affiliation of their holders, but passports do not.<sup>137</sup>

Another example of the government’s control of religion is the requirement for all religious groups to register with the government. Foreign religious missionaries must obtain permits with the government. To qualify for a permit, the religious group sponsoring the missionary must have at least 500 followers within Iraq.<sup>138</sup>

The government allows schools to offer religious instruction. In order to graduate, three hours of Islamic study are required daily by students in primary and secondary school, except for those who are non-Muslim.

Officially, the Iraqi government maintains a policy of protecting individuals and religious groups and their right to gather and worship freely. In practice, however, the ongoing insurgency impedes the ability of many citizens to worship freely. The government, focusing its resources on overwhelming problems with reconstruction and the insurgency, in the past lacked the ability to address religious abuses.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, “Iraq: International Religious Freedom Report 2006: Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom: Restrictions on Religions Freedom,” 26 October 2009, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127348.htm>

<sup>136</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, “Iraq: International Religious Freedom Report 2006: Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom: Restrictions on Religions Freedom,” 26 October 2009, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127348.htm>

<sup>137</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, “Iraq: International Religious Freedom Report 2009: Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom: Legal/Policy Framework,” 26 October 2009, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127348.htm>

<sup>138</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, “Iraq: International Religious Freedom Report 2009: Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom,” 26 October 2009, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127348.htm>

<sup>139</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, “Iraq: International Religious Freedom Report 2009: Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom: Abuses of Religious Freedom,” 26 October 2009, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127348.htm>

## Baathism

Baathism became an important political philosophy with religious overtones. The Baath party was formed in 1943 to promote Pan-Arabism. It became the state party under Saddam Hussein in Iraq, where Baathists belonged to the Sunni branch of Islam. The Baath party also became the state party under a different mantle in Syria, unaffiliated officially with the party in Iraq.<sup>140</sup> Under the provisions of the 2005 Constitution, the Baath Party remains a banned institution.<sup>141</sup>



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Ba'ath Party House, Iraq

## Religious Laws

Under the Baathists, civil courts did not enforce the nation's laws. Instead, they furthered tribal and personal interests. Saddam Hussein created divisions and subdivisions in the courts, with courts reporting only to him, thus creating a system open to personal corruption where decisions could be concealed.<sup>142</sup> The current constitution has established a court system that should provide the foundation for an independent judiciary. It establishes a supreme court, a court of appeals, and a central criminal court. A panel headed by one of the Supreme Court Justices will appoint new judges.<sup>143</sup>

The provisions stated within Iraqi law can sometimes be at odds. For instance, according to Islamic law, it is a criminal offense punishable by death if one converts from Islam to a different religion.<sup>144</sup> According to civil law, however, no penalty exists for conversion to a different religion. Further, Article 1 of Penal Code No. 111, established in 1969, allows only civil law to impose criminal penalties. Thus, even though Islam is Iraq's official religion and its main tenets are inviolable as stated in the Constitution, criminal or civil law seems to occupy a position of independence from religious law.<sup>145</sup>



© Angelique Perez  
Religious leader voting

<sup>140</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica Online, "Ba'th Party," 2007, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9013742/Bath-Party>

<sup>141</sup> Marshall Cavendish Corporation, *World and Its Peoples: Middle East, Western Asia and Northern Africa* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2006), 204.

<sup>142</sup> International Center for Transitional Justice, Coyle, Marcia, "Toward an Iraqi Legal System," 21 April 2003, <http://www.ictj.org/en/news/coverage/article/432.html>

<sup>143</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Iraq: Government and Politics," August 2006., <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>144</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, Lionel Beehner, "Religious Conversion and Sharia Law," 8 June 2007, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/13552/religious\\_conversion\\_and\\_sharia\\_law.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/13552/religious_conversion_and_sharia_law.html)

<sup>145</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Iraq: International Religious Freedom Report 2009: Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom: Legal/Policy Framework," 26 October 2009, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127348.htm>

## Influence of Religion on Daily Life

In Islam, prayer is required five times daily—before dawn, mid-morning, mid-afternoon, at sundown, and after sundown. One can pray at a mosque, at home, or in a private place in an office. Before prayer, there is a ritual cleansing of the face, hands, feet, and head, called *wudu*, which is performed as a fixed ritual. Once *wudu* has been performed, no interruptions are permitted until after prayers are completed. If there is an interruption, the one praying must begin the entire process again.



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Imam Hussein Shrine

In Iraq, religion obviously plays a large and sometimes divisive role in daily life in many areas of the country. Whether one is Sunni or Shi'ite could mean the difference between life and death due to sectarian violence. In Baghdad, neighborhoods that were once mixed with Sunnis and Shi'ites are no longer mixed. Many people were purged, or driven out of neighborhoods by sectarian militias simply because they were on the wrong side of the divide at a given moment. Where the Shi'a Mahdi Army ruled, Sunnis were displaced or killed. Shi'ite families who stayed in their neighborhoods had to depend on the Mahdi Army and its network to procure living necessities. Even now, lacking a strong, central government, Iraqi civilians can fall prey to neighborhood vigilantes or ongoing insurgent violence because of their religious affiliation.<sup>146, 147</sup>

Women often worship in private at home so that they may care for their children. In a mosque, women worship separately.

## Buildings of Worship

Iraq has countless mosques, numerous prominent Shi'a shrines, and a number of churches. The mosques generally fall into one of two categories: the smaller *masjid*, and the larger *jami*. A *jami* is usually identifiable by the presence of a prominent minaret tower. Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims have both kinds of mosques, but only Shi'ite Muslims have shrines. Over the centuries, the Shi'ites have built their shrines to mark the location of historical Islamic events and to identify the tombs of prominent Shi'ite personalities. Iraq's many Christian churches vary in shape and size. The physical features of the churches for each branch of Christianity are often distinct.



© PBS NewsHour / flickr.com  
Mosque in Baghdad

<sup>146</sup> Steven Lee Myers, "Iraqi Political Theater, Even as Democracy Struggles," *The New York Times*, 19 September 2010,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/20/world/middleeast/20iraq.html?scp=4&sq=violence%20in%20Iraq%202010&st=cse>

<sup>147</sup> Damien Cave and Stephen Farrell, "At Street Level, Unmet Goals of Troop Buildup," *The New York Times*, 8 September 2007,

[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/09/world/middleeast/09surge.html?\\_r=2&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/09/world/middleeast/09surge.html?_r=2&oref=slogin)

### Exchange 1: Would you permit me to enter the mosque?

Soldier:	Would you permit me to enter the mosque?	tismaH-li afout bil-masjid?
Local:	No. It is only for Muslims.	la. bas lil-muslimeen.

#### Mosques

Mosques have an important, often multidimensional function. They provide Muslims a place where they can perform their daily individual prayers, as well as the weekly communal noon prayers each Friday. Mosques can also function as religious community centers, youth centers, meeting halls, and training facilities. In addition to a main prayer hall, called a *musalla*, some mosques have courtyards, classrooms, offices, and special washrooms for the ritual cleansing before prayer. The back wall of the *musalla* hall is called the *qibla*. Centered on this wall is a small niche called a *mihrab* that worshippers face when they pray. It marks the direction toward Mecca.<sup>148</sup> Off to one side of the *mihrab* there is usually a pulpit called a *minbar* for the prayer leader to use during the service. The *musalla*, which provides extra space for prayer, also usually has either a balcony or an adjoining prayer room where an overflow crowd of people can pray. Women may sometimes pray in one of its separate, partitioned areas.<sup>149, 150</sup>



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Imam Hussein Shrine

#### Mosque Etiquette

Dress codes for a visit to a mosque, or anywhere off base, require modesty and dignity. Clothing should always be loose fitting. As a rule of thumb, the more rural the region, the more one should be covered. If you are a female, you must cover your head with a scarf, and wear a long-sleeved shirt or blouse and a skirt long enough to cover the knees. While it is not necessary for males to cover their heads, it is a good idea to wear a long-sleeved shirt. Both men and women should remove their shoes and leave them in a storage area at the entrance.



© cmicblog / flickr.com  
Muslim dress code poster

Once you are inside the mosque, there are certain things you must not touch including books or walls (especially the western corner where people direct their prayers). Some mosques have a shrine that should not be touched either. Do not speak unless you are spoken to, and even then, speak in a whisper. Do not interrupt or walk in front of

<sup>148</sup> ArchNet, “Dictionary of Islamic Architecture: Mihrab” n.d., [http://archnet.org/library/dictionary/entry.jsp?entry\\_id=DIA0470](http://archnet.org/library/dictionary/entry.jsp?entry_id=DIA0470)

<sup>149</sup> Islam for Today, “Woman in Mosques—No Curtains, No Walls, No Partitions!,” 16 August 2007, <http://www.islamfortoday.com/womeninmosques2.htm>

<sup>150</sup> ArchNet, “Dictionary of Islamic Architecture: Musalla,” n.d., [http://archnet.org/library/dictionary/entry.jsp?entry\\_id=DIA0485](http://archnet.org/library/dictionary/entry.jsp?entry_id=DIA0485)

anyone who is praying. This invalidates the prayer and will upset the worshipper. These rules apply to prayer inside or outside the mosque.

**Exchange 2: Would you permit me to enter the mosque?**

Soldier:	Would you permit me to enter the mosque?	tismaH-li afout bil-masjid?
Local:	Yes, but you must remove your shoes.	eh, bas lazem tinza' Hida-ak.
Soldier:	Thank you	shukran.

In a Shi'ite mosque, you will see large banners printed on a black or green background. These banners may have personal messages of mourning or lamentations for a recently departed person. Do not touch or remove these banners. You will also find flags that will probably be green, perhaps with an Arabic slogan. Leave these alone as well.

As you enter one of the major Shi'ite mosques, a man may offer you a drink of water from a cup from which many others have already drunk. On the one hand, you do not want to risk serious illness by putting your lips on this cup; on the other hand, you do not want to insult the man and this tradition of kindness. Accept the cup of water without drinking it, say *shukran* (thank you), and return the cup to the man. This shows respect.

**Exchange 3: Remember Husayn**

Local:	Drink water and remember Husayn.	ishrab my wuDh-kur il-Husayn.
Soldier:	Thank you.	shukran.

*Shrines*

A Shi'ite shrine can be as simple as a small stone marker. Alternatively, it can be as elaborate as the golden-domed al-Askariya Shrine in Samarra. This historic structure contains the tombs of the 10th and 11th Shi'ite Imams and marks the location where the 12th Imam was last seen before he disappeared. (Unfortunately, much of the al-Askariya Shrine was destroyed during two bombing incidents in 2006 and 2007). In early 2008, reconstruction began on the al-Askariya Shrine, funded by the Iraqi government and the European Commission.<sup>151</sup> UNESCO, the UN cultural organization, was involved in the project organizing and ongoing work.<sup>152</sup>



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Al Askari Mosque, Samarra

<sup>151</sup> Randa Jamal, United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. “The Reconstruction of the Holy Askari Shrine of Samarra,” 2004–10, <http://www.uniraq.org/newsroom/getarticle.asp?ArticleID=541>

<sup>152</sup> UNESCO.org, “UNESCO Launches the Reconstruction Project of the Al-Askari Shrine in Iraq,” 26 June 2007, [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=38613&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=38613&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

Sunni and Shi'ite Iraqis combined their efforts as well, providing both labor and police security.<sup>153</sup>

Since Shi'a Islam traces its beginnings to the time of Ali, when the seat of Islamic leadership was centered in Iraq, many of Shi'a Islam's holiest cities are located here. In addition to Samarra, the Iraqi cities of Najaf and Karbala are also important Shi'ite holy sites. Najaf, located 190 km (120 mi) south of Baghdad, is the purported site of Imam Ali's tomb, and Karbala, 80 km (50 mi) south of Baghdad, is the site of Imam Husayn's tomb. The Shi'a holy cities of Najaf, Karbala, Kufah, and Al-Kazhimiyah receive many pilgrims from Iran.

Shi'ite Muslims make pilgrimages from all over the world to visit these sites, and historically such pilgrimages have been indicators of sectarian dissension within Islam. Whereas Shi'ites consider the sites to be holy places that should be known and celebrated, Sunnis believe such treatment of historic markers borders on idolatry. Throughout history, Shi'ite shrines have been vulnerable to Sunni attack. Although this points to the religious division, such attacks are at the same time usually politically motivated. Attacks on religious shrines have not typically been prompted by feuding Islamic theologians. Instead, they are usually triggered by the political agendas of those who want to exploit a rift between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims for their own political gain. One example is the regime of Saddam Hussein, which used Shi'a-Sunni divisions to manipulate and control the population. Another example is the actions of insurgency forces. Since 2003, they have continued to use sectarian-exploitation strategies to accomplish their political and military objectives.<sup>154</sup>

### *Churches*

Church buildings in Iraq vary in size and architecture depending on when they were built and which branch of Christianity built them. Roman Catholic and Orthodox church buildings tend to be the most ornate and complex.

Protestant churches in Iraq can either be large and ornate in appearance, or small and inconspicuous. In some cases, Protestant churches meet in functional multi-purpose buildings that don't always resemble churches.<sup>155</sup>



© Chris De Bruyn  
Christian church, northern Iraq

<sup>153</sup> Bradley Brooks, "Reconstruction of Samarra Shrine Unites Factions in Iraq," *USA Today*, 24 April 2008. [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-04-24-1829984633\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-04-24-1829984633_x.htm)

<sup>154</sup> Steven Lee Myers, "Iraqi Political Theater, Even as Democracy Struggles," *The New York Times*, 19 September 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/20/world/middleeast/20iraq.html?scp=4&sq=violence%20in%20Iraq%202010&st=cse>

<sup>155</sup> Upper Columbia Conference Seventh-day Adventist Church, Adventist News Network, "Iraq: Eighth Explosion Damages Baghdad Church," 13 March 2007, <http://www.uccsda.org/News/Iraq-Explosion>

## Religious Events

Because the Islamic calendar is based on phases of the moon, and the Western (Gregorian) calendar is based on solar cycles, the dates of Islamic holidays shift yearly. The Quran mentions only two celebrations: *Eid-al-Fitr*, or the festival on the last night of *Ramadan*, and *Eid-al-Adha*, the feast that celebrates Ibrahim's obedience to God's will. Both are celebrated throughout the Muslim world, often as public holidays. Some devout Muslims will not allow any celebrations other than these two, as they are the only holidays specifically mentioned in the Quran. Observing other celebrations would constitute innovation, and innovation would indicate that the Quran was not perfect and complete in the form in which it was given to Muhammad.<sup>156</sup>



© crystalina / flickr.com  
Quran

### *Ramadan*

One of the five pillars of Islam, purifying the body by fasting, *sawm*, occurs during *Ramadan*. This is a 30-day period of fasting from sunrise until sunset, breaking each day's fast with a large and festive family meal, called *iftar* in the evening. Not everyone fasts. Children, the elderly, and the infirm are exempt. During *Ramadan*, Muslims can be more sensitive and irritable than at other times simply because of the exhausting nature of such a long fast. During daylight hours, they may not eat, drink, smoke, or engage in sexual activities. Nothing may be taken by mouth. Non-Muslims should avoid eating and drinking in public during fasting hours of the day, as such activities are seen as disrespectful and rude. They should be performed privately or in one of the few restaurants that would possibly be open for business (usually in the major hotels and cities).



© Robert Couse-Baker  
Mosque in Iraq

The end of *Ramadan* is celebrated with a huge feast called *Eid-al-Fitr*. *Eid* means "festival," and the feast is joyously shared among family members and friends. The last ten days of *Ramadan* commemorate Muhammad's first revelation from the Archangel Gabriel.<sup>157</sup> Once the fast is broken (normally following sunset), life goes back to normal and a person is free to eat and drink publicly.

### *Ashura*

*Ashura* is a Shi'ite holiday that continues for several days during which many people mourn the martyrdom of Husayn, often with great passion.

<sup>156</sup> BBC, Religions, "Islam: Muslim Holy Days," 7 September 2009, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/holydays/holydays.shtml>

<sup>157</sup> Diversiton, "Islam: Holy Days, Festivals and Rituals," n.d., <http://www.diversiton.com/religion/main/islam/holydays-festivals-rituals.asp>

**Exchange 4: What is this procession all about?**

Soldier:	What is this procession all about?	shinu hal-mawkeb?
Local:	Today is Ashura, the day of Imam Husayn's martyrdom.	El-yom ashura maqtel al ImamHusayn.
Soldier:	Thank you.	shukran.

## Chapter 2 Assessment

1. The majority of Iraqi Muslims are Sunni.  
FALSE  
Between 60 and 65% of Iraq's Muslim population is Shi'ite. The Sunni, despite comprising only about one-third of the population, has historically been politically dominant prior to the 2003 U.S. invasion.
2. The schism within Islam was created when the Prophet Muhammad named his best friend as his successor.  
FALSE  
The schism developed because the Prophet Muhammad had not specified the means by which he would be succeeded. Differing factions among the Muslim leadership then supported conflicting methods of succession, with Sunnis claiming it should be the will of the community and Shi'ites claiming it should be a member of the Prophet's family.
3. Sufism is a strain of Shi'a Islam.  
FALSE  
Sufis look for a closer personal relationship with God through spiritual, often mystical, discipline. Sufism is practiced by several groups who emphasize different dimensions and rituals of the religion.
4. Baathism is a syncretic religion found predominantly among the Kurds of northern Iraq.  
FALSE  
Baathism, or Pan-Arabism, though not a religion, became an important political philosophy with religious overtones. It was the dominant party of the Saddam Hussein regime. Today, it is banned by the 2005 Iraqi Constitution.
5. The religious schism between Shi'ites and Sunnis has been exploited for political purposes and has led to sectarian violence.  
TRUE  
Neighborhoods that were once mixed with Sunnis and Shi'ites are no longer mixed. Many people were purged, or driven out of neighborhoods by sectarian militias simply because they were on the wrong side of the divide at a given moment.

## Chapter 3 Traditions

### Greeting and Interacting

In Iraq it is respectful and customary to greet people with the words *as-salamu 'alaykum*, which means “Peace be upon you.” The proper answer to this greeting is *wa 'alaykum as-salam*, meaning “And upon you be peace.” When you greet a man, shake hands (always use the right hand), then touch your right hand to your heart. This indicates that the handshake is from the heart and not a test of strength. Also, remove your gloves before shaking hands.



© Courtesy of Translate Google.com  
Peace be upon you

Interaction between opposite sexes invokes strong cultural prohibitions. Greeting an Iraqi woman should be restricted to a head nod accompanied by the phrase *as-salamu 'alaykum*. Though a handshake between opposite genders is acceptable in some situations, it is a good policy to adhere to the head nod and then to follow the female's lead. If she offers to shake hands, lightly grasp only her fingertips. Kissing on both cheeks, regardless of sex, is an informal tradition reserved for close friends or relatives. Visitors to the culture should not assume this level of closeness or informality.

It is necessary to address people in Iraq in a formal way if no prior introductions have taken place. To communicate respect, add *ostaath* (professor, teacher, or sir) before a man's first name or the word *ostaatha* before a woman's first name. In rural areas, address men with the word *akhee* (my brother) and women with the word *uKhtee* (my sister). Using only a person's last name to address him or her is discouraged because it is disrespectful and therefore inhibits communication.

In American culture, we appreciate eye contact, as we believe it expresses sincerity. In Iraq, the tradition is different, and breaking eye contact is not rude. The same is true for holding hands. You will see to Iraqis of the same gender walking down the street hand-in-hand. This shows friendship or kinship.<sup>158</sup>

### Hospitality

In America, we would simply offer a plate of food and allow our guests to serve themselves with no restrictions. Traditions of hospitality and acceptable manners are different in Iraq. An Iraqi might offer you a piece of the food, using his right hand. Accept it with your right hand. Whenever interacting with your hands, use your right hand; the left hand is considered unclean. Among most Arabs, the left hand is used only for hygiene purposes. This is true in both urban and rural areas.<sup>159</sup>

<sup>158</sup> Paul Rieckhoff, *Chasing Ghosts: Failures and Facades in Iraq: A Soldier's Perspective* (New York: NAL Caliber, 2007), 70-71.

<sup>159</sup> Najeh M. Ahmad, MD, “Arab-American Culture and Health Care: Arabic Culture and Health Care,” 15 April 2004, <http://www.cwru.edu/med/epidbio/mphp439/Arab-Americans.htm>

Also, do not cross your legs or stretch your legs out when sitting around a low table or otherwise on the ground. Showing the soles of your feet to another person is considered an insult.



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Girl carrying tea

If your hosts serve you tea or coffee, it is polite to accept it. To reject it indicates rejection of the host, and is offensive behavior. The drink is likely to be rather sweet. To signal that you do *not* want a second cup, put your right hand, palm down, over the top of the cup.

**Exchange 5: Please, do drink tea.**

Local:	Please, do drink tea.	tfaDhal ishrab chay.
Soldier:	Thank you.	Shukran.

If you admire or compliment an Iraqi's possessions, he might try to give them to you. If this happens you can politely refuse. He will probably offer it at least two more times. Refuse all three times, politely and graciously.

**Exchange 6: Your shirt is nice.**

Soldier:	Your shirt is nice.	gameesak Holu.
Local:	Please accept it, it's yours.	iqbal, bil-urDha.
Soldier:	No, thank you, it's yours.	la, shukran, mabrouk 'alayk.

*Exchanging Gifts*

Iraqis love to give and receive gifts, and when possible it is polite to participate in the exchange.<sup>160</sup> When an Iraqi gives you a gift, he expects a gift in return, although he will never actually say this. The gift really is the thing, not the expense. It should always be offered with both hands, never the left hand alone. The recipient may or may not open the gift in front of you.<sup>161</sup>



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Al Nahtha Elementary School

**Exchange 7: This is for you.**

Local:	This is for you.	tfaDhal.
Soldier:	You shouldn't have!	shinu hazzaH-ma.
Local:	It's just a little thing.	fad shee baSeet.
Soldier:	Thank you.	shukran.

<sup>160</sup> Andrew J. Olmsted and Nancy Olmsted, *A Soldier's Words* (New York: Vantage Press, 2009), 85.

<sup>161</sup> Kwintessential, "Iraq – Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette," n.d., <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/iraq.html>

### Sharing

If you are on break, eating a snack or a meal, and there are Iraqi children or men close by, it would be a kind gesture to offer some of your food to them. If you offer food only once, they will probably say no. So offer it a second or third time, and then they might smile and accept your offer. Offering several times is standard in Iraqi culture.<sup>162</sup>



© Elisha Dawkins  
Sharing tea in Iraq

#### Exchange 8: Please have some.

Soldier:	Please have some.	tfaDhal!
Local:	No thanks.	la, shukran.
Soldier:	Please have some, you have to eat some!	tfaDhal, lazem ta-kul!
Local:	Thank you very much.	zayn shukran.

Sometimes you will work closely with Iraqi colleagues or counterparts. One day, they might bring food to the office, maybe some sweets, and offer it to you. It is best to accept a small amount graciously and with thanks. Also, if you are going somewhere, it is acceptable to offer an Iraqi male acquaintance a ride in the front seat.

#### Exchange 9: Please climb aboard.

Soldier:	Please climb aboard.	tfaDhal iSad.
Local:	No, please, after you.	la, tfaDhal inta al-awwal.

### Honor and Offenses

Honor deserves special mention because of the importance it has in an Arabic society and some of the ways it manifests itself. It is a violation of honor to embarrass someone. In very serious cases of violated honor, the only way to expunge shame, especially public shame, is by killing the offender. In Arab culture, threatening to shame someone is also a way through which a family or tribe can exert control over the behavior of its members.<sup>163, 164</sup>



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Tea house, Hajji village

Other offenses may be so inappropriate as to be a violation of honor. Offering your left hand to someone or using your left hand to give something to someone is an insult. Another offense is getting directly down to business when in a meeting. Arabs prefer to get to know the person they are dealing with and precede business transactions with

<sup>162</sup> Anthony Ham, et al., *Middle East* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet, 2009), 223.

<sup>163</sup> Geraldine Bedell, "Death Before Dishonour," *Guardian Unlimited*, 21 November 2004, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/gender/story/0,11812,1356386,00.html>

<sup>164</sup> Mark Leon Goldberg, "UN Report: 'Honor Killings' Rampant in Iraq," *UN Dispatch*, 29 April 2009, <http://www.undispatch.com/un-report-honor-killings-rampant-in-iraq>

coffee or tea, questions about one's health, and the like. It is more than a question of good protocol to respect such cultural mores; it communicates honor for oneself as well as for the culture one is visiting and sharing.

### **Vendettas and Honor Killings**

There is an old Arab saying, "It's me against my brother; it's me and my brother against my cousin; it's me, my brother, and my cousin against the world." A tribe may seek to avenge the death of one of their members by killing a member of the murderer's tribe. This is legal in the eyes of the community, both under shari'a and secular law. Do not interfere in these disputes unless Command has issued a policy to stop them. Leave the matter to local authorities.<sup>165</sup>



© Adam Jones, Ph.D.  
Graves for victims of chemical attack

The same applies to honor killings. Because of the perceived value of a family's honor, an individual can legally punish any affront against family, kin, or neighbor. This could include killing a female relative for violating family honor. It is best not to get involved. Do not interfere unless Command has issued a policy to stop it.

### **Male-Female Relationships**

Muslims revere honor. The quality and position of the male members of a Muslim in society are measured by the esteem in which the entire family is held. The honor of that family is directly expressed in the quality and purity of its females. Therefore, females may not have contact with males outside their family. In homes, they care for children and the household, and they have separate quarters.



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Women in Sadir City

Women are generally segregated and secluded. Their educational opportunities are fewer, though now increasing, but females continue to bear primary responsibility for care of the family and home. Women's opportunities tend to be extensions of the family-care positions. In areas such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance, women are still relegated to subordinate positions.<sup>166</sup>

<sup>165</sup> Karl Zinsmeister, *Dawn over Baghdad: How the U.S. Military is Using Bullets and Ballots to Remake Iraq* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2004), 172.

<sup>166</sup> Aaron D. Pina, "Women in Iraq: Background and Issues for U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, 13 March 2006, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL32376.pdf>

### Interaction with Iraqi Women

Visitors to the culture should adhere to strict formality when interacting with Iraqi women. You should address a woman older than 50 as *Khala*. This is even more respectful than “ma’am.” Call a younger woman *uKhtee*, which literally means “my sister,” but is taken to mean “miss” or “ma’am.” Another title of respect is *sit*, meaning “ma’am,” used in the office environment.



© Expert Infantry / flickr.com  
Iraqi woman and U.S. Army captain

Interaction between sexes is usually acceptable only in universities and in the workplace. Dating is not an Iraqi or Muslim custom. Normally a couple does not appear alone in public unless legally engaged or married.

Certain prohibitions narrow interactions between men and women even further: Muslim women do not marry non-Muslims. Iraqi women, Muslims or Christians, seldom marry foreigners. For this reason, foreign male visitors to Iraq, and to the Arab world in general, are strongly advised not to pursue romantic interests in Iraqi society. Men should refrain from approaching or addressing women in the street unless they are first introduced. Females who are perceived to have dishonored their family may have to contend with the wrath of their relatives, which could mean death in an honor killing. Making a pass at or staring at a female in Iraq could carry serious consequences for all involved. All of this applies equally to Kurdish families.<sup>167, 168</sup>

If you need to speak with a female, it is highly advisable to find a female soldier to intervene. This protects honor and prevents many problems. Otherwise, address questions to the accompanying male. Male soldiers should not speak to any Iraqi woman unless she is accompanied by a male family member.<sup>169</sup>

If you are a male, do not ask an Iraqi man direct questions about the females in his family. Just ask, “How is your family?” Only a female is free to ask about the females in the family.

### Exchange 10: How are you, how’s the family?

Soldier:	How are you, how’s the family?	shlonak, shlon al-ahel?
Local:	Thanks to God, they are fine, thanks.	al-Hamdu lillah, zayneen, shukran.
Soldier:	Thanks to God.	al-Hamdu lillah.

<sup>167</sup> GlobalSecurity.org, “Iraq: Lifestyle,” 22 June 2005,

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/lifestyle.htm>

<sup>168</sup> IRIN, “Iraq: ‘Honour Killings’ Persist in Kurdish North,” 6 December 2007,

<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=75714>

<sup>169</sup> Matthew D. Wojtecki, *Every Other Four : The Journal of Cpl. Matthew D. Wojtecki, Weapons Company 3rd Battalion 25th Marines, Mobile Assault Team Eight* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2006), 45.

## Other Traditions

### *Dress Codes*

Western attire is well known and widely worn in Iraq, but some limitations exist. For example, short pants are only worn by young children or athletes on the sports field. Men keep their shirts on regardless of the heat. Except for many areas of southern Iraq, women are not generally required to cover themselves from head to toe, as is the case in Yemen or Saudi Arabia. Although Baghdad has always been more cosmopolitan in dress, following the 2003 invasion of Iraq and subsequent sectarian unrest, more women chose to wear the head-covering hijab, while others were forced to do so by family members for protection, or by militants attempting to enforce their religious ideology. This trend has varied somewhat with changes in the security environment.<sup>170</sup> Conservative dress still prevails: women should not wear mini-skirts, sleeveless blouses, low-cut sweaters, or revealing clothing. Women sometimes wear more contemporary fashions in private, but to ignore conservative dress restrictions publicly can lead to severe penalties.<sup>171, 172</sup>



© Michael J. MacLeod  
Ramadi residents

Depending on Command, short-sleeved shirts are acceptable if you are in military uniform. In mosques, everyone removes footwear and females wear headscarves. A general rule of thumb is not to attract attention to yourself.

### *Alcohol*

Until it was banned by the former regime in 1994, alcohol was openly consumed in taverns, bars, and cabarets in Baghdad and other large cities. Some Iraqis still consume alcohol in the privacy of their own homes, but it is safer not to discuss or consume alcohol in public to avoid complications. Strict Muslims follow the doctrine of the Quran, which forbids the consumption of alcohol.

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<sup>170</sup> Adel Rashid, "Iraqi Woman Can Now Say No to Hijab or Head Scarf," *ABC News*, 26 March 2009, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=7168860&page=1>

<sup>171</sup> Associated Press, "40 Women Killed Over Clothing in Iraq," *NY Daily News*, 10 December 2007, [http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/2007/12/10/2007-12-10\\_40\\_women\\_killed\\_over\\_clothing\\_in\\_iraq.html](http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/2007/12/10/2007-12-10_40_women_killed_over_clothing_in_iraq.html)

<sup>172</sup> Afif Sarhan, "Iraq's Undercover Fashion," *IslamOnline.net*, 19 July 2009 [http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article\\_C&pagename=Zone-English-News/NWELayout&cid=1246346421551](http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&pagename=Zone-English-News/NWELayout&cid=1246346421551)

### Photography

Taking pictures is considered offensive unless prior permission is obtained from those being photographed. In general, refrain from photographing females.



© Jackie Guthrie  
News cameraman

### Gestures

If you are in a heated discussion and you are trying to signal “patience” or “slow down,” hold your right hand in front of you with the palm up and with fingertips touching. Move the hand up and down a bit and bend your head down a little. This means “just hang on for five seconds!”

Iraqis signal “yes” in the same way Americans do, by nodding. However, Iraqis have different signals for “no” or “don’t.” For example:

- Move your head back and make a clicking sound with the tongue as in “tsk, tsk.”
- Wave the open palm of your right hand from right to left while facing the person.
- Tilt the head slightly back and raise the eyebrows.

### Firing Rifles in Celebration

Iraqis often celebrate a wide variety of events and occasions by firing rifles in the air. This could be the return from the hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca), a funeral, a wedding, the birth of a baby, or the arrival of a family member after a long absence. There may be many people firing their rifles in the air. You may initially think that these gun shots indicate hostile activity in the vicinity. Before making this assumption, you should first ascertain whether a celebration is in process.<sup>173</sup>

### Exchange 11: What is all this firing about?

Soldier:	What is all this firing about?	shinu hal-Talqaat?
Local:	We have a wedding going on.	‘eedna zaffa.

<sup>173</sup> Neil Mackay, *The War on Truth: or Everything You Always Wanted to Know About the Invasion of Iraq but Your Government Wouldn't Tell You* (Philadelphia: Casemate, 2006), 343.

## The Baathist Generation

A whole generation of Iraqis has grown up in fear of the Baathist regime. They have known war and violence since the outbreak of the Iraq–Iran War in 1980. Saddam Hussein and his circle ruled absolutely. The regime did not respect the law; they were the law. As a result, this generation of Iraqis has not developed a respect for law as such; instead, they respect and fear the one who is in charge. Those who had connections to the regime could commit crimes with impunity. This mentality has ruled for a generation and it will not disappear overnight.<sup>174</sup>



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Iraq-Iran War memorial

## Non-Religious Celebrations

Several celebrations and holidays take place throughout Iraq. New Year's Day (1 January) and Labor Day (1 May) are national holidays. Army Day is 6 January, but is not celebrated as a public holiday. Republic Day is 14 July, and marks the date in 1958 when Iraq's King Faisal II was overthrown and killed in an Army coup d'état.<sup>175</sup>

On the first day of spring (usually 21 March) the Kurds and many Iraqis celebrate *Nowruz* (also *Noruz*), which is also celebrated in Iran and countries throughout Central Asia and the Caucasus. It represents rebirth at the beginning of a new year, celebrated with singing and dancing, parades, picnics, and poetry recitals. People express their wishes to each other for good health, prosperity, and happiness in the year ahead. *Nowruz* marks the beginning of the Kurdish calendar year.<sup>176</sup>



© Michael T. Luongo.  
Kurdish fold dance troupe

Celebrated nationwide as a public holiday between 2004 and 2006, 9 April marked the end of Saddam Hussein's regime. Although it was done away with as a holiday in 2007, it is now known as Baghdad Liberation Day and is celebrated in Kurdish regions.<sup>177</sup>

<sup>174</sup> Steven J. Costel, *Surging Out of Iraq?* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2008), 159.

<sup>175</sup> April Fast, *Iraq: the Culture* (St. Catharines, ON: Crabtree Publishing Co., 2010), 13.

<sup>176</sup> Cultural Profile Project: Iraq, "Holidays," Canadian Citizenship and Immigration Service, n.d., <http://www.cp-pc.ca/english/iraq/holidays.html>

<sup>177</sup> Q++ Studi., "Public Holidays and Bank Holidays for Iraq," 2010, <http://www.qppstudio.net/bankholidays2011/iraq.htm>

## Social Events

### *Engagement and Marriage*

Most marriages in Iraq are contractual agreements. They are entered into to establish new familial networks and improve or strengthen the position of the families. In the Arab world as in much of the Eastern world, marriage is seen as a bond not just between two individuals, but between two families.



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Wedding party, Zahko

Most Iraqi parents still arrange their children's marriages according to tradition. When a son or daughter comes of age, the parents contact relatives and friends to ask about the availability of an eligible marriage partner. Once a match is proposed, both young people may decline the proposal. If a man declines, it is more polite for him to indicate that his proposal was not accepted.

### **Funerals and Processions**

Muslim custom requires the body of the dead to be ritually washed, wrapped in a plain white shroud, and buried all within 24 hours. Prayers for the dead, *januzah*, are said over the body, either at the home, funeral parlor, or mosque, and are then followed by a procession to the gravesite. Muslims do not allow cremation. Typically, there is a mourning period of 40 days.<sup>178</sup>



DoD Image / Daniel Nelson  
Grave site, Barzan, Iraq

When you see a procession of faithful Shi'ite Muslims on the street, either in a funeral procession or in some other religious gathering, do not interfere. Just stand aside and show respect.

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<sup>178</sup> April Fast, *Iraq: the Culture* (St. Catharines, ON: Crabtree Publishing Co., 2010), 15.

## Dos & Don'ts

- **Do** use your entire *right* hand only to summon a person. Keep your palm down and wave downward.
- **Do** show respect in appearance, demeanor, and behavior when visiting a mosque.
- **Do** keep your feet down and your soles on the ground.
  
- **Don't** summon women if you are a male soldier. Request assistance from a female soldier.
- **Don't** use the Western way of beckoning with one finger. It is very offensive.
- **Don't** point to anyone with a finger; use the whole *right* hand instead.
- **Don't** make the "A-OK" signal (circle with index finger and thumb of one hand). Some Iraqis may misinterpret it as an obscene gesture.
- **Don't** stare at Iraqi women. The consequences for both you and them could be extreme.
- **Don't** talk with an Iraqi with your hands in your pockets, not even one hand. This is seen as impolite.
- **Don't** cross your legs when sitting in a chair, or show the bottom of your feet to anyone.



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Great Mosque, Hewlêr (Erbil)

## Chapter 3 Assessment

1. In Iraq, greeting a new acquaintance using only their last name is perfectly acceptable.  
FALSE  
It is necessary to formally address people in Iraq if no prior introductions have taken place.
2. It is best not to admire or compliment an Iraqi's possessions.  
TRUE  
If you do he might try to give them to you. If you think he is well dressed and say so, and the Iraqi offers you the shirt off his back, thank him and politely refuse.
3. Most marriages in Iraq are contractual agreements.  
TRUE  
Such marriages are entered into to establish new familial networks and improve or strengthen the position of the families.
4. Muslims must be buried within 24 hours of their death.  
TRUE  
Muslim custom requires the body of the dead to be ritually washed, wrapped in a plain white shroud, and buried within 24 hours.
5. Firing rifles in the air is typical of many Iraqi celebrations.  
TRUE  
This could be to celebrate the return from the hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca), a funeral, a wedding, the birth of a baby, or the arrival of a family member after a long absence.

## Chapter 4 Urban Life

### Introduction

In 2008, two thirds of Iraq's total population was urban, reflecting the trend toward urbanization over several decades.<sup>179</sup> During the oil boom of the 1970s, unemployment in rural areas led people to move to the cities. Significant migration also occurred during and after the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988.<sup>180, 181</sup> When rural tribal families of peasant farmers, shopkeepers, small traders, and artisans migrated to Iraqi cities, they mostly congregated around others from their own villages or tribes. Many set up small shops to sell their handicrafts out of one-man stores. The majority worked for wages in the service industry or as unskilled laborers or construction workers. This migration created entire urban areas of people loyal only to a particular tribe or village.



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Route Gold, Sadr City, Baghdad

The post-Saddam Hussein insurgency further divided Iraqis along sectarian and ethnic lines. Daily life in Iraq today is precarious as locals deal with violence, particularly in northern and central Iraq. Iraqis who once enjoyed one of the highest standards of living in the Middle East and then suffered the humanitarian crisis that followed the 2003 U.S.-led invasion are now making modest progress toward rebuilding their lives. However, millions of Iraqis still have no access to clean water and health care and are dependent on food assistance. Children and the displaced, who are nearly half of the entire population, are particularly at risk. Many displaced Iraqis have taken shelter in places with no jobs and limited public services.<sup>182</sup> Elsewhere corruption and inefficiency have left millions of Iraqis with no access to electricity.<sup>183</sup> Violence, inefficiency, and corruption hamper humanitarian aid and create obstacles in ongoing reconstruction projects.<sup>184, 185</sup>

<sup>179</sup> CIA World Factbook, "Iraq," 26 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>180</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, "Iraq: Urban Society," May 1988, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field%28DOCID+iq0042%29>

<sup>181</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, "Iraq: Introduction," May 1988, <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-6566.html>

<sup>182</sup> Reuters Foundation, "Iraq in Turmoil: At a Glance," *AlertNet.org*, 6 July 2010, [http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/571273.htm?v=at\\_a\\_glance](http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/571273.htm?v=at_a_glance)

<sup>183</sup> Steven Lee Myers, "A Benchmark of Progress, Electrical Grid Fails Iraqis," *The New York Times Online* 1 August 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/02/world/middleeast/02electricity.html?pagewanted=1&ref=world>

<sup>184</sup> Timothy Williams, "U.S. Fails to Complete, or Cut Back, Iraqi Projects," *The New York Times Online*, 3 July 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/04/world/middleeast/04reconstruct.html>

<sup>185</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, "Total Internally Displaced Population is Estimated to be 2.76 Million (as of November 2009)," 02 March 2010, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/%28httpEnvelopes%29/B6C0B024031DFA0F802570B8005A74D6?OpenDocument>

## Urban Work Problems and Issues

Unemployment remains high in Iraq, varying by region and by age. The most recent official figures indicate a 12-18% unemployment rate, but unofficial sources estimate a rate as high as 30%.<sup>186, 187</sup> Unemployment and

underemployment is greater in urban centers than in rural areas, and much higher among youths than for the general Iraqi population.<sup>188</sup> In 2005,

unemployment estimates were much higher at 30-60%, owing in part to the security situation and the number of returning Iraqis who were also seeking jobs.<sup>189</sup> In 2005, public sector job cuts reduced the number of jobs in Iraq by half, but U.S. and Iraqi government authorities opened new training centers within the same year to alleviate unemployment. The figure has since fluctuated.<sup>190, 191</sup>



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Baghdad, Iraq

Iraq's economy has been damaged in numerous ways, resulting in high unemployment and underemployment. The reasons include the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s; the long-term international sanctions that followed Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1991; and the subsequent Persian Gulf War, the latter of which saw up to 90% of Iraq's power-generating capacity and systems of distribution destroyed.<sup>192</sup> Aside from the wars, Iraq's development was impeded by Saddam Hussein's monopoly on power and resources. The result was an economy characterized by illegal activity in the public sector.<sup>193</sup> Manufacturing was not diversified or modernized. Most large businesses were state-owned, and factories and machines languished in disrepair.

### *Reconstruction Efforts*

After the 2003 invasion of Iraq by Coalition Forces, a special International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI) was created to support the country's reconstruction and development. Much of the IRFFI funding was diverted for providing security, increasing oil production, and for training programs. This shift of funds to non-

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<sup>186</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, "Background Note: Iraq," 17 September 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6804.htm>

<sup>187</sup> CIA World Factbook, "Iraq: Economy," 26 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>188</sup> United Nations, Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit, "Iraq Labour Force Analysis 2003-2008," January 2009, [http://www.iauiraq.org/reports/Iraq\\_Labour\\_Force\\_Analysis.pdf](http://www.iauiraq.org/reports/Iraq_Labour_Force_Analysis.pdf)

<sup>189</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, *Country Profile: Iraq*, August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>190</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, *Country Profile: Iraq*, August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>191</sup> Brookings Institute, "Iraq Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq," 25 May 2010,

<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Centers/Saban/Iraq%20Index/index20100525.pdf>

<sup>192</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, *Country Profile: Iraq*, August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>193</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, *Country Profile: Iraq*, August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

infrastructure projects was a response to changing circumstances on the ground, seen in the development of an insurgent movement.

High unemployment in Iraq intensified the insurgency by offering paid roles in the insurgency to people with no income. One approach to halting this practice involved closer working ties between the U.S. military and tribal sheiks. Iraq's tribal sheiks, who have led the people in the region for millennia, have strong influence with local people and also want to bolster their own business interests by achieving a stable economy. Working through them helped to stabilize the population and led to more jobs and better security.<sup>194, 195</sup>



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Baghdad street

## Health Issues

### Pre-2003

Once considered the best medical facilities in the region, Iraqi hospitals and clinics are now unable to provide quality medical care.<sup>196, 197</sup> After 1991, Saddam Hussein reduced expenditures for health services by 90%.<sup>198</sup> The U.S. invasion of 2003 and its aftermath destroyed approximately 12% of Iraq's hospitals and both of the country's major medical laboratories.<sup>199</sup>

### Post-2003

Seven years after the U.S. invasion, Iraq's health care system is still recovering from the damage. There have been improvements in certain areas, and overall Iraqis can move about more safely and access healthcare more easily. However, Iraq still faces a number of medical challenges including lack of qualified personnel, inadequate facilities, lack of proper equipment, and shortage of water and electricity. According to the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), in 2008 there were 16,000 doctors and 17,000 nurses in Iraq. In contrast, during the 1990's there were 34,000 physicians in Iraq.<sup>200</sup>



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<sup>194</sup> Elaine M. Grossman, "Unemployment Fuelling Iraq Insurgency," *Military.com*, 22 December 2006, <http://www.military.com/features/0,15240,121041,00.html>

<sup>18</sup> Jerry Saslav, "Sheikhs Pursue Peaceful Solutions in Iraq," *American Forces Press Service*, 4 November 2008, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=51774>

<sup>196</sup> Neil Shea, "Against the Odds: U.S. Medical Teams Offer a Measure of Hope to Injured Iraqis," *National Geographic*, December 2006, [http://www7.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0612/feature3/online\\_extra.html](http://www7.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0612/feature3/online_extra.html)

<sup>197</sup> Laura Dean, "How Iraq's Health Care System Has Changed," *Change.org*, 9 April 2010, <http://news.change.org/stories/how-iraqs-health-care-system-has-changed>

<sup>198</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, *Country Profile: Iraq: Health*, August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>199</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Iraq," August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>200</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, "Iraq: Putting the Health-care System Back on Its Feet," 29 July 2010, <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/iraq-update-290710>

Because of the physician shortage, many Iraqis have to rely on nurses for most of their medical care.

In general, healthcare services and access to them are better in urban areas than rural areas. Most services provided by clinics and hospitals are free, except for afternoon consultations at low-cost, semi-public health clinics. More well-off Iraqis might pay out-of-pocket expenses for private medical care. The state-owned pharmaceutical and medical appliance company provides government-subsidized products, which are helpful as there is no public or private health insurance. Only a few small health insurance programs exist for employees of specific companies. Generally, the pharmaceutical industry has been in decline for two decades due to government policies, international sanctions, and wars.<sup>201</sup> The focus of U.S. and international aid agencies, together with the Iraqi Ministry of Health, has been improving and rebuilding health care facilities. This includes addressing shortages of medical supplies, drugs, and equipment. One notable success has been the immunization program.<sup>202</sup> In the first year after the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom, 30 million doses of children's vaccinations were reportedly distributed.<sup>203</sup> By 2008, approximately 98% of all Iraqi children under the age of five were immunized against polio and over 90% of one-year olds were immunized against tuberculosis.<sup>204</sup>

#### *Water and Infrastructure Effects on Healthcare*

The Tigris and the Euphrates once were the main sources of water in Iraq. However, the rivers' water levels have been dropping and they are no longer a reliable source of safe drinking water. Population growth and displacement have also strained this scarce resource. Today, it is estimated that almost half of Iraqis throughout the country lack safe drinking water.<sup>205</sup> Insufficiently powered water and sewage facilities and inadequate water distribution systems lead to

contamination. Lack of access to an improved water source can lead to water-borne diseases. Between 2006 and 2007, the United Nations reported a 70% increase in the number of cases of diarrhea among children and a 50% increase among adults.<sup>206</sup>



© Aaron Keene  
Baghdad rush hour

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<sup>201</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, "Iraq: Putting the Health-care System Back on Its Feet," 29 July 2010, <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/iraq-update-290710>

<sup>202</sup> Rob Sixsmith, "Iraq Completes First-Ever National Immunization Week," UNICEF, 6 May 2010, [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/iraq\\_53568.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/iraq_53568.html)

<sup>203</sup> "Iraqi Ministry of Health Becomes First Ministry to Enter the Final Stage to Sovereignty (press release)," Coalition Provisional Authority, 28 March 2004, [http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/cpa-iraq/pressreleases/20040328\\_health.html](http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/cpa-iraq/pressreleases/20040328_health.html)

<sup>204</sup> UNICEF, "Iraq: Statistics," 2 March 2010, [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/iraq\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/iraq_statistics.html)

<sup>205</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, "Iraq: Water Formerly a Blessing, Increasingly a Problem," 14 May 2010, <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/update/iraq-update-110510.htm>

<sup>206</sup> Tom Nagorski, "Iraq: Where Things Stand," *ABC News*, 19 March 2007, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/Story?id=2962206&page=4>

In addition to these problems, corruption and continuing security concerns led to insufficient progress in developing new public health infrastructure. A case in point was a highly publicized program to build 150 primary health care facilities, 60 of them in southern Iraq.<sup>207</sup> However, poor contractor performance and lax oversight of the construction resulted in only 20 of these facilities by mid-2010. Government corruption, intensified by the country's ongoing divisions, is also blamed by Iraqis "for the poor state of electricity, water and other basic services."<sup>208, 209</sup>

## Education

Iraq's educational system, once the pride of the Middle East, has severely deteriorated. In previous decades, schools were mainly secular. The country's major assets were its well-educated populace and its high literacy rate for women. In 1982, UNESCO granted Iraq an award for "eradicating illiteracy." However, over the past 20 years, economic sanctions, wars, and misdirected funds have deeply affected the educational system.<sup>210</sup> Rates of literacy dropped to below an estimated 60%.<sup>211</sup> By "2003 an estimated 80 percent of Iraq's 15,000 school buildings needed rehabilitation and lacked basic sanitary facilities, and most schools lacked libraries and laboratories."<sup>212</sup> Because of unstable conditions, the present curriculum does not prepare the students well for the labor market and is in need of modernization.



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Old Market, Erbil

Another obstacle to education is lack of security from violence. According to the Ministry of Education, "259 academics [were] assassinated; another 72 [were] abducted and 174 [were] in detention between 2003 and 2008."<sup>213</sup> During the violent 2005-2007 years, the Ministry of Human Rights reported hundreds of students were targeted and killed by militants.<sup>214</sup> As insurgent attacks became less frequent in 2008 and 2009, so did the targeting of schools and academics.<sup>215</sup>

<sup>207</sup> B. J. Weiner, "150 New Health Care Clinics Planned for Iraq," *Defend America*, 6 July 2005, <http://www.defendamerica.com/articles/jul2005/a070605dg4.html>

<sup>208</sup> Reuters Foundation, "Iraq in Turmoil: At a Glance." *AlertNet.org*, 6 July 2010, [http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/571273.htm?v=at\\_a\\_glance](http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/571273.htm?v=at_a_glance)

<sup>209</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, "The Political Battle in Iraq," *The Brookings Institution*, 30 June 2010, [http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2010/0630\\_iraq\\_trip\\_pollack.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2010/0630_iraq_trip_pollack.aspx)

<sup>210</sup> Christina Asquith, "Turning the Page on Iraq's History," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 4 November 2003, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/1104/p11s01-legn.htm>

<sup>211</sup> US AID, "Assistance for Iraq: Education," 9 April 2007, <http://www.usaid.gov/iraq/accomplishments/education.html>

<sup>212</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, *Country Profile: Iraq: Education and Literacy*, August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>213</sup> UNESCO, "Education Under Attack," 2010, 202, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001868/186809e.pdf>

<sup>214</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "2008 Human Rights Report: Iraq: Academic Freedom and Cultural Events," 25 February 2009, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/nea/119116.htm>

<sup>215</sup> UNESCO, "Education Under Attack," 2010, 213, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001868/186809e.pdf>

For all these reasons, the Iraqi government has made education one of its main priorities and increased government spending from 7.2% in 2008 to 9.9% in 2009.<sup>216</sup> A new national education strategy is designed to improve institutional capacity and improve the country's educational policies. Currently, education for children is free and compulsory for six years.<sup>217</sup>



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Naz City

Since the reduction in violence in many areas, school attendance has returned to normal levels. According to UNICEF, between 2003 and 2008, the primary school attendance rate was 91% for males and 80% for females.<sup>218</sup> More than 900,000 school children still need greater access to education.<sup>219</sup> Some of these children are in the cities hard hit by sectarian and insurgent violence, such as Baghdad, Ramadi, Fallujah, and Kirkuk, which also saw some of the sharpest declines in school attendance.

### **Telecommunications**

The conflict in Iraq beginning in 2003 damaged much of the telecommunications network and severely disrupted service, including international connections. Since then there has been much progress, making the telecommunication industry one of the success stories of post-war Iraq.<sup>220</sup>

In recent years, mobile phone use has grown more rapidly. This is due in part to the destroyed electrical system and privatization of the telecommunications industry.<sup>221</sup>

Whereas several years ago cell phone use in Iraq was virtually non-existent, today over 60% of the Iraqi population uses cell phones.<sup>222</sup> The mobile cellular market's subscribership base is expected to continue expanding rapidly in coming years.

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<sup>216</sup> United Nations, Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit, "Education in Iraq [p. 1]," April 2010, <http://www.iauiraq.org/reports/mdgs/Education-Factsheet-English-v2.pdf>

<sup>217</sup> U.S. Department of State, "2009 Human Rights Report: Iraq: Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons: Children," 11 March 2010, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/nea/136069.htm>

<sup>218</sup> UNICEF, Data by Country, "Iraq: Statistics," 2 March 2010, [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/iraq\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/iraq_statistics.html)

<sup>219</sup> UNICEF, "Middle East and North Africa Iraq," 2010, [http://www.unicef.org/har2010/index\\_iraq.php](http://www.unicef.org/har2010/index_iraq.php)

<sup>220</sup> USAID, Assistance for Iraq, "Projects Completed: Telecommunications," n.d., <http://www.usaid.gov/iraq/accomplishments/telecom.html>

<sup>221</sup> Glenn Zorpette, "Iraq Goes Wireless," *IEEE Spectrum*, March 2006, <http://spectrum.ieee.org/computing/networks/iraq-goes-wireless>

<sup>222</sup> Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Remarks at the U.S.-Iraq Business and Investment Conference," U.S. Department of State, 20 October 2009, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/10/130729.htm>

## Daily Life of Urban Dwellers

The threats of kidnappings, murders, bomb-rigged cars, government sweeps, and general violence that prevailed after 2003 caused people to come home earlier and stay home. Urban neighborhoods that were once mixed became divided along sectarian lines and were permeated by an atmosphere of suspicion or fear of violence. Although violence has decreased, it is still very much present in the daily lives of many Iraqis.<sup>223</sup>



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Mushada, Iraq

## Displaced Iraqis

Sections of many neighborhoods are vacant since Iraqis of the former middle class have left for other countries. An estimated 4.5 million Iraqis have been uprooted. Among them are internal refugees, displaced persons, and asylum seekers. Many Iraqis are still living as refugees in Syria, where they are not allowed to work except in the informal market, and many others are living in Jordan.<sup>224</sup>

Some refugees who fled the city have been returning to Baghdad, cheered by news of decreasing violence in the city or having simply run out of money. The government has been providing bus rides back to Baghdad from Damascus, Syria, to which most refugees had fled. In 2008 and 2009, approximately 80,000 refugees and 300,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) returned to their homes.<sup>225</sup> However, their status is often uncertain once they get back. IDPs may find that their homes have been taken over by others, or that neighborhoods that were once Sunni or mixed have now become Shi'ite enclaves. There are no guarantees that they will even have a place to live when they return. They may end up living among thousands of other displaced Iraqis in settlements or camps in poor conditions and where they have no access to healthcare and no opportunities to earn a living.<sup>226, 227</sup>

Thousands of displaced Iraqi children and teens have been in need of counseling and social services to help with trauma they have experienced through war. The breakdown in social structure that children have experienced has led to learning disorders, behavioral difficulties, panic attacks, sleep problems, and psychosomatic illness. Many fled to

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<sup>223</sup> Reuters Foundation, "Iraq in Turmoil: At a Glance," *AlertNet.org*, 6 July 2010, [http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/571273.htm?v=at\\_a\\_glance](http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/571273.htm?v=at_a_glance)

<sup>224</sup> Reuters Foundation, "Iraq in Turmoil: At a Glance," *AlertNet.org*, 6 July 2010, [http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/571273.htm?v=at\\_a\\_glance](http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/571273.htm?v=at_a_glance)

<sup>225</sup> UNHCR, "2010 UNHRC Country Operations Profile – Iraq," <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e486426>

<sup>226</sup> Liz Sly, "Refugees Unsure What Awaits in Iraq," *Chicago Tribune Web Edition*, 9 December 2007, [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2007-12-09/news/0712080378\\_1\\_refugees-baghdad-shiite-families](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2007-12-09/news/0712080378_1_refugees-baghdad-shiite-families)

<sup>227</sup> Reuters Foundation, "Iraq in Turmoil: At a Glance," *AlertNet.org*, 6 July 2010, [http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/571273.htm?v=at\\_a\\_glance](http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/571273.htm?v=at_a_glance)

Jordan to escape the fighting and have benefitted from programs put in place by the Jordanian government working with NGOs.<sup>228</sup>

### *Daily Living Issues*

Urban residents may find it difficult to procure everyday living necessities, depending on location and local conditions. The ending of pre-war sanctions and the opening of borders generally facilitated the greater availability of goods. In other areas, acquiring goods is difficult because of the danger of traveling outside one's immediate neighborhood.

Inflation and poverty have also made it difficult for Iraqi citizens to obtain daily necessities. The poverty rate in Iraq is high, with nearly a quarter of the population spending "less than US \$2.2 per day."<sup>229</sup> City residents do not grow their own food, and like the entire Iraqi population, they have relied on subsidies for basic goods since UN sanctions started in 1991. As of 2010, government food aid went to about 90% of the population.<sup>230</sup> Living conditions remain "precarious" for most Iraqis.<sup>231</sup>



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Iraqi soldier distributes water

### *Housing and Home Life*

The traditional Iraqi home would seem quite private by Western standards. If the family lives in a private house, it probably sits sheltered behind a high, windowless wall. Even in an apartment, the family guards its privacy. Even in modest homes, the family sets aside a room like a formal parlor for the men to receive male guests. This allows female family members to move around the home without being around unrelated males.<sup>232</sup> Families cook meals on propane stoves. Most city residents eat at home; few people can afford to eat out at restaurants.<sup>233</sup>



© Casey West  
Iraqi coffee

### *Favorite Pastimes*

Smoking and drinking tea are favorite pastimes for Iraqis, although smoking is more prevalent among males. If you smoke around Iraqis, you should offer cigarettes all around; anything less

<sup>228</sup> International Organization for Migration, "Addressing the Psychosocial Needs of Young Displaced Iraqis (press briefing)," International Organization for Migration, 25 May 2010, <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/media/press-briefing-notes/pbnAF/cache/offonce?entryId=27425>

<sup>229</sup> Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit, "Education in Iraq (factsheet)," United Nations, April 2010, 1, <http://www.iauiraq.org/reports/mdgs/Education-Factsheet-English-v2.pdf>

<sup>230</sup> Reuters Foundation, "Iraq in Turmoil: At a Glance," *AlertNet.org*, 6 July 2010, [http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/571273.htm?v=at\\_a\\_glance](http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/571273.htm?v=at_a_glance)

<sup>231</sup> Reuters Foundation, "Iraq in Turmoil: In Detail," *AlertNet.org*, 6 July 2010, [http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/571273.htm?v=in\\_detail](http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/571273.htm?v=in_detail)

<sup>232</sup> J.N. Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia Society and Economy at the Dawn of History* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 143.

<sup>233</sup> Victoria Fontan, *Voices from Post-Saddam Iraq: Living with Terrorism, Insurgency, and New Forms of Tyranny* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008), 23-24.

would be impolite. It is also impolite to ask an Iraqi not to smoke.<sup>234</sup>

Drinking coffee is another favorite pastime in Iraq, and Arabic coffee is the norm. Served in small cups, it is customary to shake the cup slightly once you have had enough; otherwise, your cup will be continuously replenished. The tradition of serving Arabic coffee denotes generosity and is even a matter of tribal pride. Refusing to drink the coffee when offered could be mistaken for unfriendliness on the part of the guest. This is more so the case in the rural and tribal areas of Iraq, though with the increased movement of rural people to urban settings, it may also be true in cities.<sup>235, 236</sup>



© seelensturm / flickr.com  
Baklava

### Restaurants and Eating Habits

Iraqis insist on paying in restaurants, sometimes more than they can afford.<sup>237</sup> In their homes, Iraqis eat three meals each day, with the evening meal around 8 p.m. Extra food is often prepared in case surprise guests stop by to visit.

Arab food has its roots in the nomadic lifestyle—easily carried, herded, and stored, such as lamb, goat, or beef, with many kinds of grains and nuts.<sup>238</sup> In the past it was cooked over open fires, but today people use stoves fueled by gas or paraffin oil. Many also use microwaves.<sup>239</sup>

The Iraqi diet consists mainly of grains, vegetables, and meat when people can afford it. Both time and skill go into the preparation of many desserts. *Baklava*, for instance, is a well-known pastry made by layering honey, pistachios or walnuts, and rose water between thin sheets of filo dough.

### Exchange 12: Please have some.

Iraqi:	Please have some.	tfaDhal.
Soldier:	Thank you.	shukran.

### Market Place

Vendors in markets sell most products that are available for purchase. Many Iraqis buy meat and vegetables from the market, called a souk. Iraqis receive a monthly food ration, but it does not include meat or vegetables. Souks also specialize, so you might find a gold

<sup>234</sup> Pinar İlkkaracan, *Deconstructing Sexuality in the Middle East: Challenges and Discourses* (Burlington, VT: Asgate, 2008), 148-149 fn39.

<sup>235</sup> Susan M. Hassig and Laith Muhmood Al Adely, *Iraq* (New York: Benchmark Books/Marshall Cavendish, 2004), 124.

<sup>236</sup> Edward L. Ochsenschlager, *Iraq's Marsh Arabs in the Garden of Eden* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2004), 147.

<sup>237</sup> Cultural Orientation Resource Center, "Iraqis—Their History and Culture: Some Cultural Differences," 18 February 2004, <http://www.cal.org/co/iraqi/icult.html>

<sup>238</sup> Canadian Citizen and Immigration Service, "Eating the Iraqi Way," <http://www.cp-pc.ca/english/iraq/eating.html>

<sup>239</sup> Karim M.S. Al-Zubaidi, *Iraq a Complicated State: Iraq's Freedom War* ([S.I.]: Authorhouse, 2010), 10.

souk, a book souk, a rug souk, and others that only sell one kind of product. Typically, you can buy “everything from saffron to Saddam memorabilia” from a souk.<sup>240</sup>



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Souk, Sulimaniyah, Iraq

Unfortunately, market places have become frequent targets of bombings, placing a serious economic strain on small shop owners. Goods have become more difficult to get from wholesaler markets in cities such as Baghdad, which now close much earlier. In addition, increasing security costs and wholesale price inflation have forced vendors either to pass these costs along to shoppers or to absorb the costs and reduce their profit margins.<sup>241</sup>

### Street Vendors

It is fine to accept food when you know and trust the one who has offered you the food. Do not, however, buy food from street vendors as its safety is questionable.

### Exchange 13: Buy some baklava?

Iraqi:	Buy some baklava? It's very delicious!	tishtari baqlawa? kulish Tayeba!
Soldier:	Thank you, it sure looks great, but I am on duty and am not allowed to eat.	shukran, akeed Tayeba, bas ani bil-wajeb, mamnu' akul.

### Transportation

Iraq's transportation system includes both ancient and modern means of travel, from camels and donkeys in rural areas, to railways and ports with standards that are relatively high compared to other countries in the region.<sup>242</sup>



DoD Image / Gustavo Olgiati  
Donkey-pulled cart, Basra, Iraq

Rail lines connect Iraq to Turkey and Europe with connections through Syria, but many tracks in the country are poorly maintained.<sup>243</sup> Eighty-four percent of the country's roads are paved, but remain in poor condition due to war and lack of maintenance.<sup>244</sup>

<sup>240</sup> Shelley Thrakal, "Iraq: 12 Months On," *BBC News*, 2004,

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/aboutbbcnews/hi/this\\_is\\_bbc\\_news/newsid\\_3700000/3700123.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/aboutbbcnews/hi/this_is_bbc_news/newsid_3700000/3700123.stm)

<sup>241</sup> Aseel Kami, "Violence, Inflation Eat Into Baghdad Stores," *Reuters*, 7 December 2006,

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2006/12/07/uk-iraq-baghdad-shops-idUKIBO66037820061207>

<sup>242</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Iraq: Transportation and Telecommunications." n.d.,

<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22931>

<sup>243</sup> Jonathan Head, "Iraq-Tukey Railway Link Re-Opens," *BBC News*, 16 February 2010.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8518109.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8518109.stm)

<sup>244</sup> CIA World Factbook, "Iraq," 03 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

In addition to the two major international airports in Baghdad and Basrah, new ones have been built in Kurdistan in Erbil and Sulaimaniyah, while a third was built in the Shi'ite holy city of Najaf.<sup>245, 246</sup> The old airport in Mosul reopened in 2007.<sup>247</sup> Of the more than 100 airports in Iraq, only 75 have paved runways.<sup>248</sup> All of the airports need modernizing, including the installation of security and air traffic control equipment.

Umm Qasr is the only deepwater port in Iraq and has considerable dock and warehouse storage space to handle 80 percent of the country's imports, but it is in major need of renovation.<sup>249</sup> In 2010 an Italian company agreed to begin construction of a new USD 6 billion port at al-Faw, in the country's southern tip, that will rival the Suez Canal in capacity.<sup>250</sup> Other waterways in Iraq are smaller and more specialized. The ports on the Shatt al-Arab are hampered by low water levels, security difficulties, silting, and obstructions in the water. In addition to large ports, river boats also navigate the Tigris River from Basrah to Baghdad.<sup>251</sup>

### Traffic

Traffic chokes the streets of Baghdad and can be dangerous.<sup>252</sup> Often traffic signals do not work because of electrical blackouts. Both pedestrians and drivers alike do not know or ignore traffic regulations. In addition, insurgents sometimes set up traffic jams to explode devices among cars trapped in the jams. Move out of traffic jams quickly, firmly, and politely.



© Jim Greenhill  
Traffic outside Baghdad, Iraq

### Exchange 14: Please give way.

Soldier:	Please give way.	raja-an inTee Tareeq.
Iraqi:	Please pull over.	raja-an waKher sayyartak.
Soldier:	Please let the military vehicle pass.	raja-an Khalee al-sayyarat al-skariya tfout.

<sup>245</sup> Azworldairports, "Iraq Airports," 2010, <http://www.azworldairports.com/azworld/p1780.cfm>

<sup>246</sup> Khaled Farhan, Reuters, "Iraq Hopes New Najaf Airport Heralds Tourism Boom," 20 July 2008. <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSANS84004720080720>

<sup>247</sup> United States Forces-Iraq, Inside the Force, "Mosul Airport Reopens for Commercial Flights After 14 Years; Religious Pilgrims Board Iraqi Airplane," 3 December 2007. [http://www.usf-iraq.com/?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=15615&Itemid=21](http://www.usf-iraq.com/?option=com_content&task=view&id=15615&Itemid=21)

<sup>248</sup> CIA World Factbook, "Iraq," 03 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>249</sup> Aref Mohammad, Reuters, "Iraq Port Buckles Under Demand of Arriving Oil Majors," 28 June 2010, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKLDE65R0BA20100628>

<sup>250</sup> Iraq Business News, Industry and Trade, "Iraq Ministry of Transportation Lays the Foundation of Al Fao Great Port," 12 April 2010, <http://www.iraq-businessnews.com/?p=2398>

<sup>251</sup> University of Military Intelligence, "Iraq Economy: Infrastructure," 2004–2007, [http://www.universityofmilitaryintelligence.us/tcc/cultural/iraq/economy\\_infrastructure.asp](http://www.universityofmilitaryintelligence.us/tcc/cultural/iraq/economy_infrastructure.asp)

<sup>252</sup> Zaid Sabah and Jim Michaels, "Baghdad Traffic Police Expect the Unexpected," *USA Today*, 8 February 2007, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-02-08-life-iraq-traffic\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-02-08-life-iraq-traffic_x.htm)

## Checkpoints

Checkpoints are a way of life for anyone living in Iraqi cities or regions that are still prone to violence. Following are some of the situations one might encounter, and suggestions for dealing with them.



© Justin Naylor  
Iraqi checkpoint, Bushariya

Iraqi women will not feel comfortable showing their ID card to male soldiers. It would be best to find a female soldier to do the talking, thus, protecting the honor of the family. If there is no female soldier to address the Iraqi woman, the next best thing is for the male soldier to address himself to the male family member of the Iraqi woman, not to the Iraqi woman directly. A female soldier may speak directly to an Iraqi male without reservation.

Iraqis took over control of checkpoints in the 10-square-km (4-square-mi) Green Zone along the Tigris River in central Baghdad beginning in January 1, 2009, and began taking over remaining ones from U.S. forces in June 2010.<sup>253, 254</sup> The handover was part of the phased withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq beginning 31 August 2010.<sup>255</sup>

### Exchange 15: Ma'am, your ID please.

Soldier:	Ma'am, your ID please.	uKhtee, haweetich bala zaH-ma.
Iraqi woman:	I do not have an ID.	ma 'andi haweeya.

Some illegal checkpoints have been set up by militia groups, causing additional traffic jams and confusion among drivers who are already stressed. In all cases, it is best to remain calm and polite.

### Exchange 16: May I trouble you for your IDs please?

Soldier:	May I trouble you for your IDs, please?	bela zaH-ma huweeyatkum?
Iraqi:	Here, take it.	tfaDhal.

### *Grouping at the Checkpoint*

Do not place unrelated males and females in the same group. For example, if you are guarding a checkpoint and you must order the passengers of a bus to step off so that you can check their documents, try to lead the males into one group and the females into another group. At a checkpoint, allow families to stay together. Do not group unrelated males and females together.

<sup>253</sup> Associated Press, "Iraq Takes Control of Green Zone From U.S.," *Fox News*, 1 January 2009, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,474847,00.html>

<sup>254</sup> Reuters, "Iraq Takes Control of Green Zone Checkpoints," *ABC News* (Australia), 1 June 2010, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/01/2915597.htm>

<sup>255</sup> Rod Nordland and Timothy Williams, "Iraq Force Soon to be a Coalition of One," *The New York Times Online*, 28 July 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/29/world/middleeast/29iraq.html>

## Rifles Abound

There are many rifles in Iraq. Most families own at least one rifle for self-protection and self-defense. While such traditions are respected, the weapons are banned in military facilities or zones.



© James McMauley  
Weapons

### Exchange 17: Are you carrying weapons? No.

Soldier:	Are you carrying weapons?	shayel islaH?
Iraqi:	No.	la.
Soldier:	Please open the trunk.	raja-an iftaH sundoug al-sayyara.

In the following exchange, the soldier asks the Iraqi to surrender his weapon temporarily while on military grounds or passing through a checkpoint. Do not expect an Iraqi man to give up his rifle willingly. He owns his rifle to protect himself and his family, and it is a question of honor. He will not give it up easily.

### Exchange 18: Are you carrying weapons? Yes.

Soldier:	Are you carrying weapons?	shayel islaH?
Iraqi:	Yes.	na'am.
Soldier:	Please surrender your weapon, and you may enter.	raja-an sallem islaHak hna wa-tfaDhal udKhul.

## At the Base Access Gate

Iraqis will sometimes show up at various military facilities seeking jobs, medical attention, or police assistance. They might also be selling food, snacks, or souvenirs.



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Muthana Zayuna Police Station

### Exchange 19: Are you looking for a job?

Soldier:	Are you looking for a job?	inta itdower shughul?
Iraqi:	Yes sir.	na'am, saydee.
Soldier:	I am sorry; this is not a place of hiring.	ani asef haDha mu makan ta'yeenat.

In most cases, the guard must redirect them or turn them away politely and respectfully. However, if they come with information about insurgents, follow the procedures given to you by your commander.

**Exchange 20: I saw some insurgents.**

Iraqi:	I saw some insurgents hiding in that house.	shufit cham muKharreb Khateleen beDhak albayt.
Soldier:	Thank you, please stay here.	shukran, raja-an ibqa hna.

If people are reporting a crime, it may be necessary to redirect them to the police force, depending on who the victim is. If a U.S. soldier has been the victim of a crime, follow the stated procedures, which may include reporting the incident to your commanding officer.



© Jayel Aheram  
Check point approach

**Exchange 21: An Iraqi was killed in the street.**

Iraqi	Someone was killed in the street.	fad waHed inkital bras alshari'.
Soldier:	From the Coalition Forces?	min quwat attaHaluf?
Iraqi:	No, Iraqi.	la, iraqi.
Soldier:	Please inform the police.	raja-an Khabbar ashurTa.

**Exchange 22: An American was killed in the street.**

Iraqi	Someone was killed in the street.	fad waHed inkital bras alshari'.
Soldier:	From the Coalition Forces?	min quwat attaHaluf?
Iraqi:	Yes, American.	eh, amreekee.
Soldier:	Thank you, I will tell my commander.	shukran, raH agoul il-amer.

If Iraqis arrive at the base checkpoint seeking medical treatment, it is best to quickly redirect them to the nearest hospital or medical facility where they can get help.

**Exchange 23: My son is sick, he needs treatment.**

Iraqi:	My son is sick, he needs treatment.	vine mareeDh, yinrad la-'ilaj.
Soldier:	Sorry, this is not a medical facility, please go to a hospital.	ani asef, haDhi mu binaya Tebbiya, raja-an ruH il-mustashfa.

## Chapter 4 Assessment

1. International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI) funds were used solely for the intended purposes of Iraq's reconstruction.  
FALSE  
Much of the IRFFI funding was diverted to provide security, increase oil production, and run training programs.
2. One approach to halting the deadly cycle of unemployment leading to insurrection and violence involved closer working ties between the U.S. military and tribal sheiks.  
TRUE  
Iraq's tribal sheiks have strong influence with local people and want to bolster their own business interests by achieving a stable economy. Working with them helped to stabilize the population and led to more jobs and better security.
3. Iraq's educational system has severely deteriorated.  
TRUE  
One of the country's major assets was its well-educated populace and its high literacy rate for women. Over the past 20 years, economic sanctions, wars, and misdirected funds have had deeply adverse affects on the educational system.
4. Mobile phone use in Iraq has grown rapidly in recent years.  
TRUE  
Whereas several years ago cell phone use in Iraq was virtually non-existent, today over 60% of the Iraqi population uses cell phones.
5. It is now easy for the average Iraqi to purchase all their needs.  
FALSE  
Inflation, poverty, and security concerns affecting markets and product availability have made it difficult for Iraqi citizens to obtain daily necessities.

## Chapter 5 Rural Life

### Introduction

Rural Iraqi villages are typically tribal and governed by a sheikh. Familial bonds bind locals together, usually living in small homes composed of mud bricks or stones with flat roofs that tend to meld into the surrounding environment. Since the rural economy is primarily based on agriculture, villages typically sit near water sources that can be used for irrigation.<sup>256</sup>



© YourLocalDave / flickr.com  
Sheiks

Customs and conduct in rural Iraq are firmly grounded in traditions, centering on a code of behavior largely focused on issues of honor and female purity. Most households are based around a joint-family arrangement, where the older generation lives with the family of their eldest son. This perpetuates a strong preference for male babies. Extended family typically lives nearby in the same village. Economic opportunities are limited, leading many children to follow the trade of their parents. Others must seek opportunities elsewhere, typically in the major cities, which have seen extensive migration from rural areas in the past few decades.

Historically, students have had limited access to public education, so most education in rural areas was provided by religious schools. Some progress has been made to improve educational opportunities, including the creation of distance learning programs aimed at addressing absenteeism and security concerns.<sup>257, 258</sup>

### Tribal Affiliation

About three-quarters of the Iraqi population claim membership in one of the nation's 150 tribes, which include around 2,000 clans.<sup>259</sup> Tribes are socially divided into sub-tribes, which are then organized into clans consisting of extended families. Although the population is connected by Islam today and some of the tribes have merged, in general Iraqis lack a common sense of identity. They feel more connected through tribal ties and code of honor than by ethnicity or religious beliefs.<sup>260</sup> Operating independently of each other, the tribes continue to be a major part of daily life in Iraq.

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<sup>256</sup> Karen Dabrowska and Geoff Hann, *Iraq: Then and Now: A Guide to the Country and Its People* (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, 2008), 142.

<sup>257</sup> Susan M. Hassig and Laith Muhmood Al Adely, *Iraq* (New York: Benchmark Books/Marshall Cavendish, 2004), 73.

<sup>258</sup> UNESCO, "The Future of Iraq: Education Fights for Its Life in Iraq," *UNESCO.org*, 11 March 2008 [http://www.unesco.org/en/single-display/news/education\\_fights\\_for\\_its\\_life\\_in\\_iraq/back/858/cHash/8c8f09e309/](http://www.unesco.org/en/single-display/news/education_fights_for_its_life_in_iraq/back/858/cHash/8c8f09e309/)

<sup>259</sup> Hussein D. Hassan, "Iraq: Tribal Structure, Social, and Political Activities," (report, CRS Report for Congress, 7 April 2008): 1, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22626.pdf>

<sup>260</sup> Hussein D. Hassan, "Iraq: Tribal Structure, Social, and Political Activities," (report, CRS Report for Congress, 7 April 2008): 1, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22626.pdf>

This tribal society became even more prominent after British imperial authorities united the three Ottoman provinces of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra into the loosely organized state of Iraq. Ethnic, religious, tribal, and linguistic divisions remained strong. The British ruled through sheiks; thus, the tribal structure remained paramount even in the new state. Even citizens who have no tribal affiliation rely on sheiks for resources, resolution of conflicts, and assistance with government matters.<sup>261</sup>



© Ba'ath party / Wikimedia.org  
Ba'ath Party logo

In urban areas today, the tribal structure has become somewhat less pervasive, reflecting a more uniform social stratification. In the early days of the Saddam Hussein regime, the Baathist ruling elite tried without success to eliminate tribal structures and tribal names. They came to realize that tribal Arabs could be depended upon in wars against Iran, and provided electricity, roads, and water systems for the villages of those tribes that were loyal to the government.<sup>262, 263</sup>

The tribes were largely left out of the political processes in post-Saddam Iraq until 2005. Since then, they have increasingly been used as mediators, interceding on behalf of U.S., Coalition, and Iraqi forces to bring order to some areas.<sup>264</sup>

### Group and Tribal Structure in Iraq Today

Tribal, ethnic, and sectarian groups intersect dynamically in the eastern half of the country, where the majority of the population of Iraq is located. Kurds are mostly found in the north, mixed with Sunni Arabs and Turkmen around Erbil and Kirkuk. The area from Mosul south along the Tigris River and along the Euphrates entering from Syria is mostly Sunni, as far south as Baghdad and Fallujah. Here, Shi'ites are mixed among the population. Shi'ites dominate the region from just north of Karbala and east to the Iranian border, all the way south to the Persian Gulf.<sup>265, 266</sup>



© Austin King  
Father with son and daughter

<sup>261</sup> GlobalSecurity, "Iraq: Tribal Structures," *GlobalSecurity.org*, 22 June 2005  
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/tribes.htm>

<sup>262</sup> LTC Michael Eisenstadt, "Article: Iraq: Tribal Engagement Lessons Learned," *Military Review* (August 2008): 161-176, [http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/cac2/coin/repository/COIN\\_Reader\\_II.pdf](http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/cac2/coin/repository/COIN_Reader_II.pdf)

<sup>263</sup> GlobalSecurity, "Iraq: Tribal Structures," *GlobalSecurity.org*, 22 June 2005,  
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/tribes.htm>

<sup>264</sup> Sabrina Tavernise and Qais Mizher, "In Iraq's Mayhem, Town Finds Calm Through Its Tribal Links," *The New York Times*, 10 July 2006,  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/10/world/middleeast/10amara.html?pagewanted=1&r=1>

<sup>265</sup> Matthew Duss and Peter Juul, "The Fractured Shia of Iraq: Understanding the Tensions within Iraq's Majority," Center for American Progress, 28 January 2009,  
[http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/01/shia\\_report.html](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/01/shia_report.html)

<sup>266</sup> Public Broadcasting Service, "Beyond Baghdad. Map: Peoples and Politics," *PBS.org*, 12 February 2004, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/beyond/etc/map.html>

The typical structure of an Iraqi tribe is in a *biet* (“house”), which is shared by the *khams* (extended family). The *khams* is structured around male children descended from the same great-great grandfather. The most basic level of organization is the single family, which may be part of a *khams* that potentially includes hundreds of members. Households organize into a clan, or *fakhdh*, and clans form *’ashira*, or tribal organizations.

Sometimes tribes will organize around a town like Fallujah. Based on 1980s genealogical charts, the Fallujiyyin (named after the town) is composed of 16 clans. Other tribes may range from a few thousand to tribes with over a million members. Several tribes form into a confederation (*qabila*), such as Saddam Hussein’s al-Bu Nasir tribe, part of a confederation around Tikrit named al-Tikrita.<sup>267</sup>

## Different Regions and Ways of Life

### *Kurds*

The Kurds are a large ethnic minority group with a long history in this part of the world. Their language, although it employs Arabic script, is not related to Arabic but is instead Indo-Iranic. Kurds keep close contact with tribes from whom they receive both protection and direction. There is an aspiration among Kurdish tribes to confederate, but thus far, they have remained autonomous. Scattered primarily across areas of Iraq, Iran, and Turkey, the Kurds still seek statehood.

Since the end of World War I, the Kurds in Iraq have openly fought for the establishment of their own ethnic state, promised to them in the Treaty of Sèvres for their support of the Allies during the war, but later reneged upon.<sup>268</sup> Tribal allegiances have generally hindered larger nationalistic Kurdish movements.

One Iraqi government after another quashed Kurdish rebellions, but none as viciously as the Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein. From 1987 to 1989, Saddam’s forces committed ethnically-motivated attacks against the Kurdish people, using poison gas in Halabjah, as well as conventional means, in an effort to eliminate the Kurds. In 1991, coinciding with encouragement from the U.S. for the Iraqi people to overthrow Saddam Hussein, the Kurds rose up, but with no practical assistance from their allies, they were defeated. This defeat forced over 1,000,000 Kurds into Iran, and as many as 450,000 of them to the border of Turkey, where they were refused admission.<sup>269</sup> A U.N. multinational force subsequently established a safe haven in the northern areas of Iraq, allowing most of the Kurds to return home.



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Semalka district, Zakho

<sup>267</sup> Hussein D. Hassan, “Iraq: Tribal Structure, Social, and Political Activities,” (report, CRS Report for Congress, 7 April 2008): 1, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22626.pdf>

<sup>268</sup> David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Opportunity, Mobilization, and Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 27-28.

<sup>269</sup> Britannica.com, “Worlds Apart: The Roots of Regional Conflicts: The Kurds,” *Britannica - The Online Encyclopedia*, 1999, [http://www.britannica.com/worldsapart/3\\_timeline\\_print.html](http://www.britannica.com/worldsapart/3_timeline_print.html)

Most villages in the Kurdish region are more remote and smaller than those in the Iraqi lowlands. The Kurds' community organizational structure begins with a *shiret*, a large Kurdish tribal confederacy, divided into a unit known as *tira*, or sub-tribe. Membership in a *tira*, which is the main landowning and political group, is inherited from a person's father. Its leader, or *raiz*, inherits his position with the approval of the senior males. Internal divisions or population growth can cause the *tira* to split into new subgroups.<sup>270</sup>

### *Nomads*

Bedouins, one of the remaining nomadic peoples in the country, have been less affected by the major changes in Iraqi society.<sup>271</sup> Many retreated into the desert to escape conflict with the dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein. Since the regime's collapse, Bedouins have returned to fertile areas near the Euphrates River where their flocks of sheep and camels can graze. The number of Bedouin remaining in the country is unknown; however, the government of Iraq has plans underway to conduct a census.<sup>272</sup>



© Hamed Saber  
Nomads' simple life

### *Marsh Arabs*

The *Ma'dan*, or Marsh Arabs, formerly lived in 15,540 sq km (6,000 sq mi) of marshland, now considerably reduced in size. Their territory lies at the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, in a triangle formed by Basra, Amarah, and Nasiriyah.<sup>273</sup> Created by the yearly flooding of the two rivers that refreshed the water in the marshes, the ecosystem here has supported civilization for over 5,000 years. In the 1970s, these wetlands supported a population of approximately 300,000 people, dispersed among nearly 60 isolated villages that had "little contact with the outside world."<sup>274</sup> The inhabitants of the marshes traditionally depended on raising water buffalo and fishing, living in houses made of reeds. Many of their houses today are small huts located on higher ground near the marshes. When the water levels are high, the people travel in canoe-like boats.<sup>275</sup>

<sup>270</sup> GlobalSecurity, "Iraq: Societal Framework," *GlobalSecurity.org*, 19 November 2010, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/society.htm>

<sup>271</sup> Seth Robson, "Iraqi Bedouin Life Continues as Always," *Stars and Stripes*, 17 July 2009, <http://www.stripes.com/news/iraqi-bedouin-life-continues-as-always-1.93397>

<sup>272</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Iraqi Census Takers To Focus On Bedouin," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 14 May 2010, [http://www.rferl.org/content/Iraqi\\_Census\\_Takers\\_To\\_Focus\\_On\\_Bedouin/2041952.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Iraqi_Census_Takers_To_Focus_On_Bedouin/2041952.html)

<sup>273</sup> Cultural Orientation Resource Center, "Iraqis—Their History and Culture: The People," 18 February 2004, <http://www.cal.org/co/iraqi/ipeop.html>

<sup>274</sup> Ernesto Londono, "Surviving, but Hardly Thriving: Water Has Returned to Iraq's Marshes, but Their Revival Remains in Doubt," *The Washington Post*, 24 July 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2009/07/23/ST2009072303928.html?sid=ST2009072303928>

<sup>275</sup> Joshua Hammer, "Return to the Marsh," *Smithsonian Magazine* (October 2006), <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/people-places/10022796.html?page=1>

Environmental devastation has profoundly affected the culture of the *Ma'dan*. In the late 1970s, the French and Iraqis developed oilfields in the area, damaging the wetlands by dredging. During the 1980-88 war with Iran, marshes along the border were damaged and strewn with landmines. The worst damage occurred during and after the 1991 Persian Gulf War, when Shi'ite Muslims in southern Iraq revolted against Saddam Hussein. In retaliation, government forces destroyed villages and built canals to divert the river waters away from the wetlands.<sup>276</sup> Most *Ma'dan* moved out of the region afterward because they could no longer support their way of life.<sup>277</sup> The wetlands area that once covered as much as 15,000 sq km (5,791 sq mi) was reduced to less than 760 sq km (293 sq mi) by the time of the regime's demise.<sup>278</sup>



© Hassan Janali  
Marsh Arabs in a mashoof

Since the fall of Hussein in 2003, water has been diverted back into the marsh areas and some *Ma'dan* have returned. It has been a continuing struggle to fully resurrect the marshes and the old ways of life of the *Ma'dan*. Neighboring Turkey has built more than 20 dams on the rivers feeding the wetlands in the last two decades, and much of the water has been siphoned off before the rivers even reach Iraq. The Euphrates has also been extensively dammed, and marshes that depended on its waters have not made a comeback.<sup>279</sup> In addition, the effects of drought and dumping sewage into the rivers have “slowed the renewal of the area’s biodiversity.”<sup>280</sup> Much of the area that had been restored has once again been “reduced to shallow creeks and mudflats.”<sup>281</sup>

### Rural Economy

The economy of most rural areas in Iraq is based almost entirely on agriculture and living off the land. Approximately 50–60% of the arable land in Iraq has been cultivated throughout the region’s known history.<sup>282</sup> Agriculture’s contribution to GDP has shrunk considerably in recent years. Lack of investment and maintenance of irrigation infrastructure or sanitation, physical destruction, and the policies of a centralized

<sup>276</sup> Ernesto Londono, “Surviving, but Hardly Thriving: Water Has Returned to Iraq’s Marshes, but Their Revival Remains in Doubt,” *The Washington Post*, 24 July 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2009/07/23/ST2009072303928.html?sid=ST2009072303928>

<sup>277</sup> Cultural Orientation Resource Center, “Iraqis—Their History and Culture: The People,” 18 February 2004, <http://www.cal.org/co/iraqi/ipeop.html>

<sup>278</sup> Muir, Jim, “Iraq Marshes Face Grave New Threat,” *BBC News*, 24 February 2009, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7906512.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7906512.stm)

<sup>279</sup> Joshua Hammer, “Return to the Marsh,” *Smithsonian Magazine* (October 2006), <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/people-places/10022796.html?page=1>

<sup>280</sup> Ernesto Londono, “Surviving, but Hardly Thriving: Water Has Returned to Iraq’s Marshes, but Their Revival Remains in Doubt,” *The Washington Post*, 24 July 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2009/07/23/ST2009072303928.html?sid=ST2009072303928>

<sup>281</sup> Jim Muir, “Iraq Marshes Face Grave New Threat,” *BBC News*, 24 February 2009, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7906512.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7906512.stm)

<sup>282</sup> Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, “Country Profile: Iraq,” August 2006, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

command economy caused Iraq's rural economy to disintegrate."<sup>283</sup> Since the late 1980s, wars, sanctions, drought, and mismanagement of soil and water resources have kept agricultural production far below levels necessary to feed the population. The international Oil-for-Food program that ended in 2003 further depressed the rural economy by encouraging the import of low-cost foreign foods, leaving farmers little incentive to plant.<sup>284</sup>



© nathanm / flickr.com  
Tigris River, Iraq

River fishing as a livelihood has also declined since 2003, due to increasing pollution from dumping industrial waste, bodies, and sewage into the Tigris River. Pollution reached such high levels that local imams declared *fatwas* (religious bans) against river fishing.<sup>285</sup> The U.S. Department of Agriculture has been working with the Iraqi government to build fisheries in some areas of the country, resulting in an increase in fish production.<sup>286</sup>

### **Life in the Countryside**

In rural areas, many families grow fruits, vegetables, and grains and may keep a few chickens or livestock such as goats or sheep.<sup>287</sup> Their monthly food ration from the government does not include vegetables, so growing their own helps to supplement their diet.

Though land ownership was privatized through agrarian reform legislation of the 1970s, many Iraqis are today selling their land to the government in order to afford the necessities of life.<sup>288, 289</sup>

Sectarian violence or the threat of it remains a part of daily rural life in some provinces although violence has decreased in Anbar Province. Many parts of the rural south have remained peaceful. Lack of progress toward national political reconciliation remains a

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<sup>283</sup> The World Bank, "Emergency Community Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project – Project Information Document (PID), Concept Stage," 28 July 2005,

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/IRFFI/Resources/EmergencyCommunityPID.pdf>

<sup>284</sup> Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, "Country Profile: Iraq," August 2006,

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>285</sup> U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), "Iraq: Imams Issue Fatwas Banning Fishing in the Tigris," *IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis*, 5 July 2007, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=73091>

<sup>286</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Fishery and Aquaculture Country Profiles: Iraq," U.N. Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, 2010, [http://www.fao.org/fishery/countrysector/FI-CP\\_IQ/3/en](http://www.fao.org/fishery/countrysector/FI-CP_IQ/3/en)

<sup>287</sup> Karen Dabrowska and Geoff Hann, *Iraq: Then and Now: A Guide to the Country and Its People* (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, 2008), 12.

<sup>288</sup> RTI International, "Land Registration and Property Rights in Iraq," (report, USAID Iraq Local Governance Program, January 2005), 4.

<sup>289</sup> Elizabeth C. Pietanza, "Culture of Iraq," *Countries and Their Cultures*, <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Iraq.html>

problem that affects both rural and urban areas. Recent elections did not lead to further reconciliation between Sunni, Shi'ite, and Kurdish factions, and political divisions still predominate.<sup>290</sup>



© Ken and Nyetta / flickr.com  
Farms with hoop houses, Basrah

In some rural areas, tribes have intervened to help restore order and fill a security role that the central government has not yet been able to meet. In one instance of tribal intervention, one town in the eastern marshlands found a way to coexist with the insurgents: the villagers used tribal connections to negotiate standoffs. After one insurgent attack, a tribal trial called a *fahsal* was convened to examine the event. The wrongdoers' families agreed to pay a large fine and banish the two men who were responsible for the attack.<sup>291</sup>

### *Rural Hospitality*

Hospitality in rural Iraq is even more elaborate and central to the fabric of society than it is in urban settings. It is considered crucial to the kinship network and code of honor, and for a member of one's family, clan, or tribe to extend lavish hospitality to a guest reflects positively upon the entire group.<sup>292, 293</sup>

### **Rural Transportation**

Through the 1970s and 1980s, the Hussein government built roughly 38,000 km (20,000 mi) of highway throughout the country, mostly for military and commercial use.<sup>294</sup> Around 85% was paved.<sup>295</sup> The 1991 Persian Gulf War targeted that transportation infrastructure of roads and bridges. Much of the damage has been repaired, but main roads and bridges have been subject to repeated damage by saboteurs.



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Bridge attacked near Baiji

In remote villages, roads are unpaved and in poor condition. Upkeep of roads in rural areas is minimal or nonexistent, and road signs are missing. Where small roads connect to larger ones, the interchanges are not well designed or constructed. The Iraqi government

<sup>290</sup> "Iraq Elections." *The New York Times*, 20 July 2010,

<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/iraq/elections/index.html>

<sup>291</sup> Sabrina Tavernise and Qais Mizher, "In Iraq's Mayhem, Town Finds Calm Through Its Tribal Links,"

*The New York Times*, 10 July 2006, <http://travel2.nytimes.com/2006/07/10/world/middleeast/10amara.html>

<sup>292</sup> Dale W. Jacobs, ed., *World Book Focus on Terrorism* (Chicago: World Book, 2002), 59.

<sup>293</sup> Richard H. Shultz and Andrea J. Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Combat* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 204.

<sup>294</sup> Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, "Country Profile: Iraq," August 2006,

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>295</sup> Pete Sigmund, "Amid Violence, Iraq Reconstruction Endures," *Construction Equipment Guide*, n.d.,

<http://www.constructionequipmentguide.com/Amid-Violence-Iraq-Reconstruction-Endures/3932/>

is encouraging investment in the country's entire transportation infrastructure, including highways, ports, civil aviation, and railways.<sup>296</sup>

There have been attacks against military and civilian vehicles in rural and urban settings. These attacks include the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Such devices are frequently "placed on roads, concealed in plastic bags, boxes, soda cans, dead animals, and in other places to blend with the road."<sup>297</sup> Anti-government insurgents are known to use rural roads as a means of avoiding checkpoints on more travelled roadways.<sup>298</sup>

### *Basic Services*

Rural Iraqis receive minimal, inconsistent services for healthcare, education, and water and sewage systems. In most rural areas, few government services are available. Sewage treatment plants are rare, and electrical power shortages remain common, leading to a reliance on back-up generators. Often, household plumbing in Iraq is substandard, and illegal connections weaken existing water distribution systems. Iraqis in general do not have safe sources of drinking water, often relying on water from polluted rivers and streams.<sup>299, 300</sup>

### **Education**

Schools in rural areas suffer from low attendance rates. According to a report prepared by Iraq's Ministry of Education, only 30% of students countrywide were attending class in September 2006, compared to around 75% the previous year.<sup>301</sup> Although public perception of education has improved since 2007 and schools have progressed, inequalities still exist.<sup>302</sup> Rates of nonattendance are higher in rural areas than in cities. Further, boys still outnumber girls at both primary and secondary levels in rural areas.<sup>303</sup> Ongoing security concerns, poverty, a lack of nearby schools, and traditional attitudes against female schooling all contribute to the problem of low school attendance. The UN survey and



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Rukiah school for girls,  
Najaf, Iraq

<sup>296</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, "Business Guide for Iraq," (business guide, United States Department of Commerce, 05 March 2004),

[http://www.baghdadbusinesscenter.org/FAQs/iraq\\_business\\_guide\\_current%203-25.pdf](http://www.baghdadbusinesscenter.org/FAQs/iraq_business_guide_current%203-25.pdf)

<sup>297</sup> U.S. State Department, "Iraq: Country Specific Information," *Travel.State.Gov*, 05 November 2010, [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1144.html#traffic\\_safety](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1144.html#traffic_safety)

<sup>298</sup> Will Hartley and Chanel White, "JTIC Country Briefing – Iraq," (Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, 1 September 2009), 39.

<sup>299</sup> Tom Nagorski, "Iraq: Where Things Stand," *ABC News*, 19 March 2007,

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/Story?id=2962206&page=4>

<sup>300</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, "Iraq: Water Formerly a Blessing, Increasingly a Problem," 14 May 2010, <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/update/iraq-update-110510.htm>

<sup>301</sup> AlertNet, "Iraq: School Attendance Rates Drop Drastically," Reuters, 18 October 2006, <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/IRIN/f90f37068737141f556e65a54bd0165d.htm>

<sup>302</sup> Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit, "Education in Iraq," United Nations, April 2010, 1, <http://www.iauihq.org/reports/mdgs/Education-Factsheet-English-v2.pdf>

<sup>303</sup> Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit, "Education in Iraq," United Nations, April 2010, 1-2, <http://www.iauihq.org/reports/mdgs/Education-Factsheet-English-v2.pdf>

other agencies state that in rural areas, girls do not attend school because their families do not want them to, often out of concern for their safety.<sup>304</sup> Deteriorating classroom infrastructure has also been a problem that keeps students away from school. Projects to construct new schools and rehabilitate old ones are ongoing.

Retaining teachers has also been a problem for the educational system in Iraq, especially in rural areas. Many teachers have fled the country. The shortage of teachers will likely continue to be an issue until the overall security situation and widespread dislocation in the country improve.<sup>305</sup>

In response to problems with schools, infrastructure, and attendance, the government has made education one of its top priorities. Foreign non-governmental organizations and the United Nations are working closely with the Iraqi government to improve educational opportunities.<sup>306, 307</sup>

### **Camps for the Displaced**

Many of Iraq's internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees who fled the violence and later returned have not been able to find housing in the cities where they once lived. Instead, they have been forced to find shelter in squatter villages or refugee camps in the countryside outside the cities, where they sleep and live in tents or small shacks. Their original homes may have been occupied by others or destroyed, or it may have been simply too dangerous for them to return to neighborhoods from which they were driven. The Iraqi government, struggling with security issues, has not had the resources or organizational capability to address the refugee problem.



© Graham A. Paulsgrove  
IDP Camp, Iraq-Jordan border

Most IDPs and refugees who have returned have no access to jobs or services such as clean water or shopping facilities. Both Sunni and Shi'ite are affected and come from all income groups—mostly poor, but some middle class and wealthy. In the camps, they all live in squalor, barely able to find food for their families.<sup>308</sup>

<sup>304</sup> Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), "Iraq: Children's Education Gravely Affected by Conflict," *IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis*, 14 March 2007, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=70697>

<sup>305</sup> Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), "Iraq: Children's Education Gravely Affected by Conflict," *IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis*, 14 March 2007, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=70697>

<sup>306</sup> UNESCO, "The Future of Iraq: Education Fights for Its Life in Iraq," *UNESCO.org*, 11 March 2008, [http://www.unesco.org/en/single-display/news/education\\_fights\\_for\\_its\\_life\\_in\\_iraq/back/858/cHash/8c8f09e309/](http://www.unesco.org/en/single-display/news/education_fights_for_its_life_in_iraq/back/858/cHash/8c8f09e309/)

<sup>307</sup> United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, "On Global Action Week for Education the UN Calls for More Funds to Improve Access to Quality Public Education in Iraq," (press release, United Nations, 20 April 2010), [http://www.uniraq.org/documents/EFA%20week%202010%20press%20release20100420\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.uniraq.org/documents/EFA%20week%202010%20press%20release20100420_Eng.pdf)

<sup>308</sup> Alissa J. Rubin, "A Bitter Life for Iraq's Displaced," *The New York Times Online*, 18 October 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/18/world/africa/18iht-najaf.4.7948542.html>

In 2009, tens of thousands of Iraqis returned to their country. Many left again almost immediately after they discovered how unstable and unsafe the conditions were. The UN reports that there have been “no large-scale returns” of the displaced from Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and other countries that accepted Iraqi refugees.<sup>309</sup>

### Landmines

After several decades of conflict and war, Iraq is contaminated with millions of explosive remnants of war (ERW) that threaten the safety of people who live and work in the country, hamper humanitarian efforts, and impede the nation’s economic recovery and development. In Iraq, this includes both unexploded and abandoned ordnance such as cluster bombs and landmines.<sup>310</sup>



© openDemocracy / flickr.com  
Minefield warning sign

The Iraqi government planned to rid the country of all victim-activated landmines by February 2018 as part of the Mine Ban Treaty to which it acceded in 2008. In 2009, the Iraqi Ministry of Environment reported that it would be unable to meet its obligation given its current resources and capacities. National and international demining teams cleared only a small area of land in Iraq between 2008 and 2009. The clearance area has been limited due to poor security, one of the main obstacles affecting demining operations.<sup>311</sup>

Besides mines associated with the ongoing insurgency, Iraq has a severe problem with landmines, unexploded ordnance (UXO), and abandoned ordnance (AXO) from conflicts that date back to World War II. Many of the legacy landmines are along Iraq’s border with Iran, left behind from the Iran–Iraq war in the 1980s. Minefields were also laid on the Saudi Arabia border and around military positions prior to the 2003 invasion.<sup>312, 313</sup>

<sup>309</sup> Kathryn Schulz, “Life in Hell,” *ForeignPolicy.com*, 12 January 2010, [www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/01/12/life\\_in\\_hell?pag](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/01/12/life_in_hell?pag)

<sup>310</sup> Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), “Iraq: Local NGOs Welcome Cluster Bomb Ban,” *IRIN News and Analysis*, 18 February 2010, <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=88146>

<sup>311</sup> UN News Service, “Greater Efforts Needed to Rid Iraq of Landmines, Says UN Report,” *UN News*, Centre, 1 July 2009, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=31327&Cr=iraq&Cr1>

<sup>312</sup> UN News Service, “Greater Efforts Needed to Rid Iraq of Landmines, Says UN Report,” *UN News*, Centre, 1 July 2009, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=31327&Cr=iraq&Cr1>

<sup>313</sup> United Nations Development Programme and UNICEF, “Overview of Landmines and Explosive Remnants of War in Iraq,” (United Nations Development Programme, July 2009), 10, [http://www.undp.org/publications/pdf/UNICEF\\_UNDP\\_july\\_2009.pdf](http://www.undp.org/publications/pdf/UNICEF_UNDP_july_2009.pdf)

### Who's in Charge

The oldest male in a group of Iraqis is the person who has the most authority, and questions should be directed to him. Still, there may be others who have more influence. To find the most influential person, it is necessary to find the leader of the tribe with the most members and contact the leader or sheik of that tribe. Throughout Iraq, among Kurds or Arabs, tribal leaders supported by family networks have more local, practical power than any urban or government force. It is not coincidental that insurgent violence in some of the western provinces only began to decrease when local tribal sheiks started to actively support the Coalition forces.<sup>314</sup>



DoD Image / Carmichael Yopez  
Tribal leaders inspect a well

### The Kunya

A soldier may search for a particular individual in his own neighborhood where he ought to be known. Yet his neighbors may say they do not know him by this name. They might use a different name to address him. Close friends, relatives (even spouses), and neighbors do not use “official” names to address one another. Instead, they use the *kunya*, a name made up of “*abu*” (father of) or “*umm*” (mother of). For example, you may be searching for Muhammad Husayn Ad-Dalaymee. Muhammad’s eldest son is Ali. Muhammad’s friends and neighbors will refer to Muhammad as “*Abu Ali*” (father of Ali), not as “Muhammad.”



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Family in Dewania, Iraq

### Exchange 24: We are looking for Muhammad Husayn AdDalaymee.

Soldier:	Please, we are looking for Muhammad Husayn Ad-Dalaymee.	raja-an dendawwer ala muHammad Husayn ad-dalaymee.
Iraqi #1:	I have not heard such a name.	ma sama' heechee ism.
Iraqi #2:	I know, you mean <i>Abu Ali</i> . You might find him in the market.	a'ruf, tuqsud abu ali. yimkin telgah bissoog.
Soldier:	Thank you.	shukran.

### Search and Cordon

<sup>314</sup> Joshua Partlow, “Sheiks Help Curb Violence in Iraq’s West, U.S. Says,” *Washington Post*, 27 January 2007, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/26/AR2007012601497\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/26/AR2007012601497_pf.html)

When searching a house, be sure not to bring a dog inside. It is highly insulting and it could get you killed. Dogs are considered unclean. If circumstances allow, knock on the door before you enter; courtesy will go a long way toward saving lives.<sup>315</sup> Give the man of the house the chance to protect his family's honor; avoid barging in on the family while the women are not covered. Though one would hope that the man of the house cooperates, do not assume that this will always be the case. People in their homes may react in unpredictable ways out of fear or hostility.



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Home cordon & search operation

**Exchange 25: Allow us to inspect your house.**

Soldier:	Please allow us to inspect your house.	ismaHelna nfattesh baytkum.
Iraqi:	Sure, but just a minute while I get the family and the kids outside.	ma yKhallef, bas daqeeqa aTalli' al-ahel wa-jehal barra.
Soldier:	Take your time.	KhoDh raH-tak.

<sup>315</sup> Bruce Hoffman, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq," (occasional paper, Santa Monica: RAND, National Security Research Division, 2004), 6.

## Chapter 5 Assessment

1. Tribal affiliation is a central component of rural Iraqi society.  
TRUE  
About three-quarters of the Iraqi population claim membership in one of the nation's 150 tribes, and villages are usually established along tribal affiliation.
2. Iraqi farmers are able to produce enough food to feed the entire nation.  
FALSE  
Since the late 1980s, wars, sanctions, drought, and mismanagement of soil and water resources have kept agricultural production far below necessary levels to feed the population.
3. The ongoing insurgent and sectarian violence that has plagued Iraqi cities has not been a factor in rural areas.  
FALSE  
Sectarian violence or the threat of it remains a part of daily rural life in some rural areas, and insurgents are known to use rural roads as a means of evading checkpoints.
4. The government is utilizing innovative means to improve the Iraqi educational system for rural students.  
TRUE  
With the aid of NGOs, the Iraqi government is delivering distance learning to students who live in areas with high absenteeism and those who live in rural and/or dangerous areas.
5. Iraq's troubles with internally displaced persons (IDPs) have become problematic for the rural population.  
TRUE  
Many IDPs have been forced to find shelter in squatter villages or refugee camps in the countryside outside the cities, where they sleep and live in tents or small shacks.

## Chapter 6 Family Life

### Introduction

Western society highly values individualism and independence, but in the Arab world, the family is central to the thoughts and actions of individuals. Iraq is no exception. In Iraq, a person is known more for his family and his position within it than for his personal or professional achievements. In more traditional families, family members choose both the marriage partner and career of their child. In some rural areas, an individual moving into a neighborhood can become a member of a tribe or clan by generations of association until the relationship is finally assumed to be by blood. Any Iraqi business owner would prefer to hire members of his own family or choose a close relative as his partner as a matter of trust. Loyalty to one's family, clan, or tribe is absolute.



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Dugmut, Kirkuk, Iraq

### Typical Household and Family Structure

The oldest male in a household will serve as the head of the family. In rural areas, his mother, wife, sons, their wives and children, and any unmarried daughters or sisters generally live under the same roof, incorporating three generations into a joint household.

The patriarch takes care of the family's estate, however large or small it may be, and his decisions are final. In public situations, males will speak for female family members. This absolute authority has been moderated slightly in Baghdad and other big cities, with the growing influence of public schools and other state institutions.<sup>316</sup>



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Rawah, Iraq

With less space to build, or fewer resources, an urban family may have all the relatives living nearby, rather than under one roof. Family visits are frequent. It is likely that in-laws, cousins, aunts, and uncles live in the same neighborhood. This is part of the kinship relationship outside the immediate household.

Iraqi houses traditionally center on a courtyard, with a windowless wall to the outside. This helps protect the family's privacy. Most homes are built to allow men to visit without accidentally running into the women of the house. This is also true in apartments, where family privacy is closely protected.<sup>317</sup>

<sup>316</sup> Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Iraq: A Country Study*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office for U.S. Library of Congress, 1988), <http://countrystudies.us/iraq/44.htm>

<sup>317</sup> Cultural Orientation Resource Center, "Iraqis—Their History and Culture: Life," 18 February 2004, <http://www.cal.org/co/iraqi/ilife.html>

Though a Muslim man may have more than one wife, in Iraq, per the Personal Status Code of 1978, he needs a court order for permission and he must treat each wife equally. Although the number of polygamous marriages increased in the wake of the Iran-Iraq War, much of this was due to men taking the widows of their deceased brothers as their second wife in order to best provide for the family.<sup>318</sup> Overall, polygamy remains a very uncommon practice due to the wealth needed to support more than one wife, and the judicial permission required.

## Married Life, Divorce, and Birth

### *Marriage*

A marriage or engagement is an exciting event, as it signals the joining of two families or the cementing of relationships within one. It is more a social contract than a religious ceremony.<sup>319</sup>

The groom will ask the prospective bride's father for her hand in marriage, in front of all males from both sides, while the women wait in another room. This serves as the major formal contract, the question already having been raised and discussed privately. The father will also most

likely have asked his daughter if she wants to marry the prospective husband. Nowadays, seldom will a girl be forced into marriage, although it can and does happen. Marriage among cousins is common, even seen as desirable, for reinforcing family and tribal ties. The religious ceremony is brief, and registration of the marriage with the court is obligatory. The wedding party after the ceremony is often big, with many guests, and the hosts provide the best food and entertainment they can afford.<sup>320</sup>



© Angelique Sanossian  
Kurdish wedding

### *Divorce*

Divorce, called *talaq*, is as emotionally difficult in Iraq as in any society. Although traditionally frowned upon, the divorce rate began to increase after the passage of the Personal Status Code of 1978. Recent figures indicate that the figure continues to rise, likely influenced by the instability and violence prevalent in Iraq.<sup>321, 322</sup> Recent changes allow divorce to be initiated by



© Austin King  
Mother carries supplies

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<sup>318</sup> Nadjé Sadig Al-Ali, *Iraqi Women: Untold Stories from 1948 to the Present* (New York: Zed Books, 2007), 140 and 197.

<sup>320</sup> Anne Bobroff-Hajal, "Why Cousin Marriage Matters in Iraq," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 26 December 2006, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1226/p09s01-coop.html>

<sup>321</sup> Nadjé Sadig Al-Ali, *Iraqi Women: Untold Stories from 1948 to the Present* (New York: Zed Books, 2007), 198.

<sup>322</sup> Alexandra Zavis, "Iraq Marriages are a Casualty of War," *Los Angeles Times*, 13 April 2008, <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/apr/13/world/fg-divorce13>

either husbands or wives, and on several different grounds. The family of a divorced woman may intercede on her behalf, as she retains a strong connection to her birth family throughout her married life. Custody of young children is usually granted to the father, or may be awarded on the basis of what best benefits the children, up to the age of 10, and in some cases, 15. At this age, children may choose with whom they wish to live. Both parties have separate and distinct financial rights under the law.<sup>323, 324</sup> Depending on how it is ultimately interpreted, the new constitution may allow these laws to be defined differently depending on sect and ethnic group.<sup>325</sup>

### *Birth*

At the birth of a child, a Muslim father whispers the Muslim call to prayer, *adhaan*, into the baby's right ear so those are the first words the newborn will hear. The first flavor the child tastes should be sweet. The parents might rub the juice of a chewed piece of date on the baby's gums.<sup>326</sup>

After the seventh day, the baby's head is shaved to show the child is the servant of Allah. The hair is weighed and its equivalent in silver is given to charity. Additionally, a sheep is slaughtered and the meat is distributed to relatives, neighbors, and the poor. Subsequent birthdays are often celebrated as in western countries, with cakes, candles, gifts, and singing and dancing.



DoD Image / Shawn Weismiller  
Taj Ghatz, Iraq

The rite of passage for boys is circumcision, called *tahara*, meaning “purification.” It occurs at any time from birth to puberty.<sup>327</sup> Whether it is celebrated elaborately or simply, it marks the beginning of a boy's life as an adult. As a prelude, the boy recites from the Quran from memory for the first time.

### *Superstitions*

One common belief in the Middle East is that you should not admire or compliment a man's children unless you qualify it with the expression *ma sha Allah*, “May God protect him.” The reason is that if you call attention to the fine features of a child, you are alerting the so-called Evil Eye, which will then come to harm the child.

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<sup>323</sup> Islamic Family Law, “Republic of Iraq: Notable Features,” n.d., <http://www.law.emory.edu/ifl/legal/iraq.htm>

<sup>324</sup> Nadjé Sadig Al-Ali, *Iraqi Women: Untold Stories from 1948 to the Present* (New York: Zed Books, 2007), 198.

<sup>325</sup> Isobel Coleman (presider), Nathan Brown and Haleh Esfandiari (speakers), “Sharia, Women's Rights, and the Iraqi Constitution,” (transcript, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 11 October 2005), [http://www.cfr.org/publication/9010/sharia\\_womens\\_rights\\_and\\_the\\_iraqi\\_constitution\\_rush\\_transcript\\_federal\\_news\\_service\\_inc.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/9010/sharia_womens_rights_and_the_iraqi_constitution_rush_transcript_federal_news_service_inc.html)

<sup>326</sup> “Muslim Birth Rites,” *BBC*, 18 August 2009, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/ritesrituals/birth.shtml>

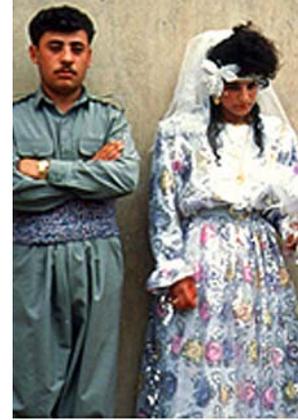
<sup>327</sup> “Muslim Birth Rites,” *BBC*, 18 August 2009, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/ritesrituals/birth.shtml>

**Exchange 27: Ma sha Allah.**

Iraqi:	This is my son Ah-mad.	haDha ibnee aHmad.
Soldier:	He looks so smart, may God protect him.	mbayyen alayh shaTer, ma sha allah.

*Domestic Law Concerning Marriage and Inheritance*

The Personal Status Law forbids Muslim women from marrying non-Muslims. A Muslim male can, however, marry a woman of any faith.<sup>328</sup> The law also states that a woman can only inherit half of the amount that a man can receive. These provisions contradict Article 14 of the constitution, which guarantees that everyone is entitled to equal protection under the law “without discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, origin, color, religion”.<sup>329</sup> A new law allows women to transfer their status as citizens to their foreign-born husband and any children they may have together.<sup>330</sup>



© K. Boggs / UNESCO.org  
Kurdish wedding couple

**Status of Women, Elders, Adolescents and Children**

Children are obligated to give their elderly parents the same care their parents gave them. Most Iraqi families have several children, who are adored and indulged. Boys absorb the attitudes of males by being included early in all-male gatherings. The males thoroughly protect girls from the very beginning, and the girls learn domestic skills by participating with their mothers, sisters, and other female relatives.<sup>331</sup>

Children who are Iraqi citizens enjoy many legal protections, but in practice their rights may be violated, sometimes due to family insecurities. For instance, Iraqi children are protected by child labor laws, yet many are employed illegally, trying to help their families survive. Recruitment of children by insurgent groups has also been a widespread problem. Such groups often use financial incentives to lure the children to join and carry out attacks.<sup>332</sup>



DoD Image / Chrissy Best  
Iraqi children

<sup>328</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, “Marriage of U.S. Citizens in Iraq,” U.S. Department of State, 8 October 2010, [http://travel.state.gov/law/citizenship/citizenship\\_774.html](http://travel.state.gov/law/citizenship/citizenship_774.html)

<sup>329</sup> United States Department of State, *2009 Report on International Religious Freedom - Iraq*, 26 October 2009, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4ae86135c.html>

<sup>330</sup> Freedom House, “New Study Finds Gains for Women’s Rights in the Middle East,” (press release, Washington, DC: Freedom House, 3 March 2010), <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=70&release=1144>

<sup>331</sup> Cultural Orientation Resource Center, “Iraqis—Their History and Culture: Life,” 18 February 2004, <http://www.cal.org/co/iraqi/ilife.html>

<sup>332</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, “2009 Human Rights Report: Iraq,” U.S. Department of State, 11 March 2010, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/nea/136069.htm>

### *Family Honor and the Status of Women*

The concept of family honor is inherently connected to women's role and their chaste conduct in the family and in society. Women in Iraqi culture are highly sheltered and seen as the bearers of culture and family values. Although strictness of customs for women in this regard varies according to religious tenets, many Iraqi women have a great deal of social power through their role in their families. Because of its complexity, the role of women and honor in Arab culture in general cannot be realistically evaluated or judged by Western standards. Being protected in their familial role is evidence that Iraqi women are cherished and respected, according to their cultural values.<sup>333</sup>



© james\_gordon\_los\_angeles / flickr.com  
Taj Ghatz, Iraq

The protection of personal and family honor, however, can sometimes lead to brutal treatment of women or even murder in the form of honor killings when women engage in what is considered unacceptable female behavior. Such behavior “may include talking with an unrelated male, consensual sexual relations outside marriage, being a victim of rape, seeking a divorce, or refusing to marry the man chosen by one’s family.”<sup>334</sup> In Iraq, gender-based violence due to these and other behaviors is both prevalent and underreported mainly because these matters are deemed private and part of the family’s affairs. In addition, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) notes that “many victims do not report incidents, out of fear of reprisals, or insensitive treatment of victims by the authorities, and are discouraged from reporting due to the lack of effective redress for gender-based violence.”<sup>335</sup> As of the December 2009 human rights report, UNAMI was still receiving reports of honor killings throughout Iraq, despite Western denouncement of these human rights violations.<sup>336, 337</sup> Although honor killings are legally equivalent to murder, authorities often encounter difficulty in finding enough evidence to prosecute cases.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Cultural Orientation Resource Center, “Iraqis—Their History and Culture: Life,” 18 February 2004, <http://www.cal.org/co/iraqi/ilife.html>

<sup>334</sup> Amnesty International, “Honor Killings,” n.d., <http://www.amnestyusa.org/violence-against-women/stop-violence-against-women-svaw/honor-killings/page.do?id=1108230>

<sup>335</sup> United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, “Human Rights Report: 1 July -31 December 2009,” 11, [http://www.uniraq.org/documents/UNAMI\\_Human\\_Rights\\_Report16\\_EN.pdf](http://www.uniraq.org/documents/UNAMI_Human_Rights_Report16_EN.pdf)

<sup>336</sup> United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, “Human Rights Report: 1 July -31 December 2009,” 3, [http://www.uniraq.org/documents/UNAMI\\_Human\\_Rights\\_Report16\\_EN.pdf](http://www.uniraq.org/documents/UNAMI_Human_Rights_Report16_EN.pdf)

<sup>337</sup> Stephanie Nebehay, “West Wants End to Torture, Honor Killings in Iraq,” *Reuters*, 16 February 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/02/16/us-iraq-rights-idUSTRE61F43520100216>

<sup>338</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, “2009 Human Rights Report: Iraq,” U.S. Department of State, 11 March 2010, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/nea/136069.htm>

### *Decline in Status of Women*

Between 1968 and 2003 “under the relatively secular Baathist regime,” women in Iraq “experienced significant legal gains.”<sup>339</sup> This was especially true in the 1970s and 1980s, when “Iraqi oil wealth financed a massive social sector expansion, helping build the public service, health, and educational sectors.”<sup>340</sup> In 1976, the Compulsory Education Law came into effect, and education became mandatory for all children, girls as well as boys, up to the age of 16. In addition, the Baathist regime put forth a constitution in 1970 that promised equal rights to all Iraqis, including women. Women benefitted from this more open environment, which reached its highest point around 1984. After the 1991 Gulf War and the imposition of UN economic sanctions (1990–2003), the position of women deteriorated as public education and literacy rates fell, and Saddam Hussein introduced harsh domestic laws. Within this more restrictive atmosphere, women were forced “out of the labor force and into more traditional domestic roles.”<sup>341</sup>



DoD Image / Mike Pryor  
Women from Sadr City

Even though women today are protected under law by the Iraqi constitution, society has become more conservative since the fall of the Baathist regime. The net effect has been profound in many cases, as “conservative society standards impeded women’s abilities to exercise their rights.”<sup>342</sup> They have been targeted, for instance, by extremists for participating in mundane activities such as driving a car or wearing clothing that did not reflect conservative Islamic practices.<sup>343</sup>

### **Naming Conventions**

A complete Iraqi name has a minimum of three components and often four, five, or more. In both the Western and Iraqi naming systems, the parents give the newborn child a “given name” which appears first in the order of names. In the West, that name might be “John” or “Mary,” and in Iraq it might be “Muhammad” or “Alia.”<sup>344</sup> The concept of the “middle name” does not exist in Iraq. Instead, every child takes his father’s first name as his or her own second name.<sup>345</sup>

<sup>339</sup> Amy V. Cardoso, *Iraq at the Crossroads* (New York: Nova Science, 2007), 115.

<sup>340</sup> Amy V. Cardoso, *Iraq at the Crossroads* (New York: Nova Science, 2007), 115-118.

<sup>341</sup> Amy V. Cardoso, *Iraq at the Crossroads* (New York: Nova Science, 2007), 117.

<sup>342</sup> Amy V. Cardoso, *Iraq at the Crossroads* (New York: Nova Science, 2007), 115.

<sup>343</sup> Amy V. Cardoso, *Iraq at the Crossroads* (New York: Nova Science, 2007), 115.

<sup>344</sup> Mountain Recce. “Guide to Names and Naming Practices.” March 2006.

<sup>345</sup> Cultural Orientation Resource Center, “Iraqis—Their History and Culture: Some Cultural Differences: Names,” 18 February 2004, <http://www.cal.org/co/iraqi/icult.html>

*Names Identify Background*

Certain names reveal a person's religious or ethnic background. Christians prefer Biblical names; Muslims prefer Islamic names. Shi'ites avoid taking the names of Sunni historical figures who persecuted the Shi'ites.<sup>346</sup>

Sunnis, Shi'ites, Christians, and Kurds share thousands of non-Islamic Arabic names as well. Family or tribal names often start with "al" and end with "i," e.g., *al-Tikri*.



DoD Image / Shawn Weismiller  
Father and son, Al Wahida, Iraq

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<sup>346</sup> Rick Jervis and Zaid Sabah, "Danger Attaches to Sunni Names" *USA Today*, 26 April 2006, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2006-04-26-sunni-name-danger\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2006-04-26-sunni-name-danger_x.htm)

## Chapter 6 Assessment

1. As in most Muslim countries, Iraqi men frequently practice polygamy.  
FALSE  
Though a Muslim man may have more than one wife, in Iraq, per the Personal Status Code of 1978, he needs a court order for permission to do so. He also must treat each wife equally and possess enough wealthy to provide for multiple families. Thus, it is exceedingly rare.
2. It is very seldom that a girl is forced into marriage, although it can and does happen.  
TRUE  
The Personal Status Code of 1978 prohibits forced marriages, but it does occasionally occur.
3. In post-Gulf War Iraq, women suffered serious setbacks to their social standing.  
TRUE  
After the war and the imposition of UN economic sanctions, the position of women deteriorated as public education and literacy rates fell and the regime introduced harsh domestic laws, forcing women out of the workplace and into more traditional domestic roles.
4. The Iraqi naming system is quite similar to those of Western countries wherein one has a given name, one or two middle names, and a family name.  
FALSE  
While there are some similarities between the two systems, the concept of a middle name does not exist in the Iraqi system. Instead, one finds the use of one's immediate ancestors' names is used in place of a middle name. Likewise, one finds additional names that may indicate one's children, tribal affiliation, or place of origin.
5. The rite of passage for boys is circumcision, called *tahara*, meaning "purification."  
TRUE  
*Tahara* occurs at any time from birth to puberty. Whether it is celebrated elaborately or simply, it marks the beginning of a boy's life as an adult.

## Final Assessment

1. Iraq's great rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, created an environment that encouraged the development of agriculture.  
TRUE / FALSE
2. Iraq has very few natural resources and must import items such as natural gas and oil.  
TRUE / FALSE
3. During the Abbasid Caliphate, Baghdad developed into the world's second-largest city and the center of Islamic art and learning.  
TRUE / FALSE
4. The British Empire created an Iraqi monarchy through which it essentially ruled the land.  
TRUE / FALSE
5. In the immediate aftermath of the U.S. invasion in 2003, the rebuilding of Iraq's infrastructure has proceeded without difficulty.  
TRUE / FALSE
6. Approximately 97% of all Iraqis are Muslim.  
TRUE / FALSE
7. Shi'a Islam has strong Persian (Iranian) influences.  
TRUE / FALSE
8. The concept of jihad focuses specifically on the struggle between Muslims and non-Muslims.  
TRUE / FALSE
9. As Iraqi culture is embracing of all religions, discussing one's faith is encouraged.  
TRUE / FALSE
10. It is perfectly acceptable for non-Muslims to eat in public during the month of Ramadan.  
TRUE / FALSE
11. Showing the soles of your feet to another is considered a terrible insult, so feet should be kept on the ground at all times.  
TRUE / FALSE
12. Damaging an Iraqi's honor could have dire consequences for you and the offended party.  
TRUE / FALSE

13. It is culturally acceptable for Iraqi women to date Westerners.  
TRUE / FALSE
14. It is illegal to consume alcohol in public in Iraq.  
TRUE / FALSE
15. If you witness cases of domestic violence or honor killings you should intervene.  
TRUE / FALSE
16. As of 2010, unemployment remained high in Iraq, varying by region and demographics.  
TRUE / FALSE
17. Once considered the best medical facilities in the region, Iraqi hospitals and clinics are now unable to provide quality medical care.  
TRUE / FALSE
18. There is plenty of potable water readily available in Iraq.  
TRUE / FALSE
19. Returning internally displaced persons (IDPs) face many hardships.  
TRUE / FALSE
20. Smoking is a favorite pastime of Iraqis, especially among men.  
TRUE / FALSE
21. The Kurds of northern Iraq have long been fighting for the establishment of a separate independent Kurdish state.  
TRUE / FALSE
22. Efforts aimed at restoring the marshlands of southern Iraq have met with spectacular success.  
TRUE / FALSE
23. There have been attacks against military and civilian vehicles in rural and urban settings.  
TRUE / FALSE
24. Iraqis in general do not have safe sources of drinking water, having to rely on water from polluted rivers and streams.  
TRUE / FALSE
25. Through the diligent work of NGOs and the Iraqi Army, nearly all explosive remnants of war (ERW) have been successfully removed.  
TRUE / FALSE

26. In traditional families, family members choose both the marriage partner and career of their child.  
TRUE / FALSE
27. Divorce rates in Iraq have remained nearly non-existent despite rapid social change and instability.  
TRUE / FALSE
28. Instances of honor killings are underreported to authorities.  
TRUE / FALSE
29. The notion of nepotism, hiring one's own family members, is more socially acceptable in Iraq than in America.  
TRUE / FALSE
30. It is common to find people in Iraq living as an extended, joint family, rather than as a nuclear family.  
TRUE / FALSE

## Further Reading

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